Præparatio Evangelica.

OR,

A Plain and Practical

DISCOURSE

CONCERNING

The Soul's Preparation

FOR

A Blessed Eternity.

Being the Substance of several

SERMONS

Preach'd at *LEEDS.*

By *TIMOTHY MANLOVE,*
Minister of the Gospel.

Heb. 12. 14. *Follow Peace with all Men, and HOLINESS, without which no Man shall see the LORD.*
1 Joh. 4. 16. *God is LOVE; and he that dwelleth in Love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.*
Heb. 2. 3. *How shall we escape if we neglect so great Salvation?*

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To the Diligent and Serious

READER.

CUſtom obligeth me to ſay ſome-thing by way of Preface, and the weight of the Subject be-fore us is ſuch, as requires the ut-moſt Diligence to preſs the ſerious Con-ſideration of it upon all to whom it is preſented.

That the Soul of Man is in its own Nature *fitted for Immortality, be-ing capable of ſubſiſting and acting in a ſtate of ſeparation from the Body, and therefore deſigned thereto, is a Truth ommonly acknowledged amongſt Chri-ians, yea, and amongſt Pagans too; as have proved at large in a former Trea-ſe.*

Now if this be a Truth, 'tis certainly a very important one, how little soever considered by the unthinking World. Must we live for ever? Surely it highly concerns us to examine whither we are going? what State we are like to enter upon when the uncertain Term of our present Life shall be at an end? Shall it be well or ill with us to all Eternity?

The Resolution of this great Question depends upon our Behaviour while we are in the Body, for according to that *we must be judged* whether it be good or bad, 2 *Cor.* 5. 10.

The Goodness or Wickedness of our Actions is to be measured by their agreeableness or disagreeableness to the Divine Law; which is norma officii & judicii, *a Rule to live by, and by which we must be judged.*

The Duties which God hath enjoined are such, as in their own Nature *do manifestly tend to qualify and fit us for that eternal Blessedness, which he hath prepared for his holy ones.*

It is therefore of great consequence to understand in some competent measure the Nature of the Heavenly Felicity; because the more clear and distinct our Apprehensions are in this Matter, the more will our Hearts be raised to desire it, and our Endeavours quickened in the pursuit of it, and the better we shall understand the way that leads to it.

The absolute necessity of Holiness, in order to our everlasting Happiness, is rather confessed, *than well understood by the generality of those that bear the Christian Name; and this not for want of sutable Means and Helps in order to such Knowledg, but for want of Hearts to use them,* Prov. 17. 16. *Men's thoughts are otherwise taken up, and their carnal Minds are averse from Considerations of this nature.*

That Holiness is necessary, because God hath commanded it, is a very great Truth, and nothing but the Truth, but yet it is not the whole *Truth neither:*

ther: For besides this legal *Necessity of it, there is also a* natural *Necessity in the case, it being as impossible in the nature of the thing that we should be* happy *without being holy, as that a blind Man should be delighted with Colours, or one that is deaf with Sounds and Harmony.*

And this will appear if we consider what it is that must make a rational immortal Spirit compleatly blessed; namely, the enjoyment of the most holy, glorious, blessed God, whereunto an unholy Soul is utterly indisposed, and disaffected; and therefore cannot be happy till its Temper be altered, and made suitable to the Object; that is, holy.

The Saints in Glory are taken up with God, admiring, loving, praising, and delighting in him as their chief Good, their only Soul-satisfying Portion, yea, and as infinitely and amiably good in himself; and withal injoying the most sweet and refreshing sense of his Love to them, without

any

any Clouds, Darkneſs, or Interruptions. Now, this kind of Happineſs is no way ſutable to the Genius *and* Diſpoſition *of an unſanctified Heart, and how ſhould a Man be happy while his very Soul is averſe to, and at Enmity againſt that which alone can make him ſo?*

This is the woful caſe of the far greater part of the World, which loudly calls for our deepeſt Lamentations over it, and our utmoſt Endeavours to redreſs it.

To this purpoſe I have thought meet to publiſh the following Diſcourſe, wherein I have laboured to lay open our Way, *and our* End, *beginning with the latter, according to the* order of intention.

I have therefore firſt laid down a ſhort, plain, ſcriptural *Account of that bleſſed State reſerved in Heaven for true Believers, and then proceeded to open the Nature of that great Work of Grace, whereby we muſt be* prepa-

red, wrought, *or made meet for that State. Each of these gives Light to the other, the* End *and* Way *are so near a-kin that they differ rather in* degree *than in* kind, Grace is Glory begun, Glory is Grace perfected.

If these things were well weighed, and compared together, the advantage would be very great every way. Give me leave to mention some few Particulars.

1. *This would effectually put to silence the ignorant Cavils of foolish Men, who complain that the ways of Holiness are too strict and precise for them. Did they but better know what the Bless'd Above are* doing, *and what they are* enjoying, *they would quickly see reason to conclude, that the greatest Diligence and Care we can use is all little enough to ripen us for so* holy, *so* glorious, *so* perfect *a State.*

2. *It*

2. *It would certainly pull down the groundleſs Preſumptions of Self-deceiving Hypocrites, who promiſe to themſelves Heaven at laſt, tho they be utter Strangers to that* vital Power *of Religion, without which there's no coming thither. No wonder that Men who hope for they know not* what *hereafter, live they know not, or care not* how *while they are here. But,* whatſoever a Man ſows, that ſhall he alſo reap. *Gal.* 6. 7.

3. *This would alſo ſhew us what way and manner of religious Worſhip is like to be moſt acceptable to God, and advantagious to our ſelves,* viz. *That which tends moſt to refine and ſpiritualize our Hearts, and ſo to fit them for Heaven.*

4. *And conſequently what ends we ought to propoſe to our ſelves in every religious Duty: Namely, that we may get as near unto God, and be as inward with him, as poſſibly we can, till we come to the State of full and perfect Communion with him.*

5. *And*

5. *And what need there is of Divine Grace to elevate and raiſe our Hearts to ſuch high and holy things as theſe. Alas, what poor work ſhall we make with ſpiritual things if we be left to our ſelves!*

6. *This will greatly ſupport the People of God under the difficulties of their preſent State and Work: Their ſpiritual Conflicts will ſoon be over, and Heaven will make amends for all. The end to which the diſpiſed ways of Holineſs lead, is unſpeakably glorious.*

Laſtly; *if the beſt of us did more clearly apprehend and frequently conſider the Bleſſedneſs of a future State, and the neceſſary Connexion or near Alliance between Holineſs and Happineſs, this would put Life into all our Motions and Tendencies Heaven-ward, and would give a moſt refreſhing reliſh and ſavour to all our Duties.*

Theſe and many more ſuch advantages would accrue to us from a right un-

understanding of our way, *and our end compared with each other. But I must not make too large a Preface to so small a Book.*

Nor will I stay to apologize (as the manner of some is) for the Weakness and Imperfections of the ensuing Treatise. Only I tell thee, I have studied that both as to the Matter, Method, *and* Stile, *it might be* plain, practical, *and profitable for the use of vulgar Readers, not to gratify the capricious wanton humors of those who have itching Ears; but to edify honest upright Hearts. I hope I can truly say in some measure, that as to the applause of Men,* desii curare, *I have done regarding it.* VVith me it is a very small Matter to be judged of Man's Judgment, 1 *Cor.* 4. 3.

Therefore to conclude; if thou wilt read deliberatly what I have written, and consider it impartially, and carry it home to thine own Heart and Conscience, by that prudent Self-application which

which the nature of thy Case shall require, I hope thou wilt get real advantage by it; and when thou hast so done, forget not to pray for him,

Who is

a very unworthy Servant of the best and greatest Master.

Leeds, Sept. 8. 1698. Timothy Manlove.

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Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is GOD.

CHAP. I.

The Dependance of the Words upon what goes before. Their Literal *and* Real *Importance. The Point of Doctrine to be insisted upon. The Method wherein it is to be handled.*

IN the foregoing Chapter we have an account of the many sufferings, and dangers to which the Apostle himself, and his Fellow-labourers in the Work of the Gospel were exposed. Vers. 8, 9. *&c. Troubled on every side, —perplexed, — persecuted, —cast down, —Always bearing about in the Body the dying of the Lord Jesus, i. e.* by suffering for his sake, and in conformity to him: As it follows vers. 11. *Alway delivered unto Death for Jesus sake.*

Moreover, he tells us what it was that bore up their Spirits, and kept them from fainting under all these Pressures, namely, a believing prospect of future Glory, whereof Christ's Resurrection was a certain Argu-

ment and Pledg, verſ. 13, 14. *We alſo believe, and therefore ſpeak: Knowing that he which raiſed up the Lord Jeſus, ſhall raiſe up us alſo by Jeſus,* verſ. 16. *For which cauſe we faint not,* &c.

He then proceeds to make a Compariſon between their preſent Troubles, and the Joy that was ſet before them. As for the *former*, he ſpeaks as tho he accounted them ſcarce worth naming: but of the *latter*, as if no words could be found great enough to expreſs it, verſ. 17. *For our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding, and eternal weight of Glory.* [καθ' ὑπερβολὴν εἰς ὑπερβολὴν] one Hyperbole upon another, and yet all little enough to ſignify the deep ſenſe which he had of the tranſcendent worth, and excellency of that weighty Glory concerning which he ſpeaks. Thus Rom. 8. 18. *For I reckon that the Sufferings of this preſent time, are not worthy to be compared with the Glory which ſhall be revealed in us.* This he did upon due deliberation, well weighing the Point, [λογίζομαι, expendo] as *Grotius* obſerves ſome of the Ancients render it.

Thus ye ſee whence it was that they fetch't their Supports amidſt all the conflicts and difficulties they met with in this World. What they look't or aimed at [σκοπέντων,] viz. *The things not ſeen, which are eternal,* verſ. 18. This was the Prize they ran for; and which they expected at length to obtain.

And now, that none might think that their hopes were wavering, uncertain or ill-grounded, he goes on in this Chapter, wherein the Text is, to declare how full and ſatisfying their Aſſurance was, in this matter, and why it was ſo.

Verſ. 1. *For we know that if our Earthly Houſe of this Tabernacle were diſſolved, we have a building of God,* &c. Note here, that Faith is a certain infallible ſort of Knowledg [we know.] So Joh. 6. 69. *We believe, and are ſure.* Rom. 8. 28. *We know that all things work together for good to them that love God.* 1 Cor. 15. 58. *Know that your Labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

Nay

Nor were their *Desires* after this blessed State less earnest, than their Belief and Hopes were *firm* and *steady*, vers. 2, 3, 4. *We groan earnestly, desiring to be cloathed upon with our house which is from Heaven, —that Mortality might be swallowed up of Life.*

And thus we are brought to the Text, in which the Apostle lays down some further grounds of this their Confidence, *viz.* They were wrought for the Heavenly Glory, and that by God himself: *Who also had given unto them the earnest of the Spirit*, as it immediately follows; and therefore, (says he) *we are always confident*, vers. 6. Again vers. 8. *We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the Body, and to be present with the Lord.* q.d. We do not run as at uncertainties, nor fight as Men that beat the Air, but know whom we have trusted, and that he will not fail our trust. This is the Faith we walk by at present, till we come to the World of immediate sight and fruition. *Vers.* 7.

And now let us return to the words of the Text, and consider more distinctly, both the literal and real importance of them.

Now he that hath wrought us] i. e. *made, formed*, or *fitted* us. The word signifies to *fashion* or *polish* a thing which was *rude* or *unshapen* before; and so 'tis used by the Septuagint, *Exod.* 35, 33. 1 *Kings* 6. 36.

For the self-same thing] *viz.* That blessed State in which *Mortality shall be swallowed up of Life*, whereof he had been speaking just before, *vers.* 4. or if you understand it of those desires and groanings Heaven-ward which are wrought in the Souls of Believers, it comes all to a sense; for none, but those who are prepared for Heaven, do *rightly* and *judiciously* desire it, as shall be shewn more at large hereafter.

Is God] even he that hath provided that Glory *for us*, vers. 1. hath also fitted us *for it*. The Order and Tenour of the words is very remarkable; God is not the *Subject*, but the *Predicate* of this Proposition. It is not thus expressed [now God hath wrought us for this] tho that had been true, but the same Truth is spoken

with a more *piercing Emphasis* and *Majesty*, as the words are here placed. *He that hath wrought us, —is God*, *q. d.* Would you know the reason of our Confidence, Hope, and earnest Desires after Heaven? Why, we are wrought for it. Do you ask how we came to be so, or who hath thus wrought us? 'Tis God that hath done it, who always acts like himself; therefore this work is divine, beseeming its great Author, such as none but he could effect, the Finger of God is plain in it, and for that reason we doubt not but the Issue will be answerably glorious and excellent. The same way of expression ye have, Chap. 1. 21. *Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is GOD.*

As for the *real* importance of the words, the only remaining difficulty (if that be any) is what divine work the Apostle here speaks of. In answer to this, I shall only take notice of the three following particulars, which are most *full* and *comprehensive* in the case.

(1.) God as he is our *Creator*, and the *God of Nature*, hath given us immortal Souls; furnish'd with faculties to prepare for a better Life. He hath made them pure, spiritual, noble, intellectual Substances, not consisting of any contrary Principles, which by acting *upon*, or *against* each other, might infer the dissolution of the whole. Now, in that he has given the Soul such a Nature, 'tis manifest that he designs it for an eternal State, because he doth nothing in vain, but always fits his Creatures for the respective ends where unto he hath appointed them: And since both *Grace* and *Glory* presuppose *Nature*, that is, the Fundamental Capacity of the Subject, therefore this particular may well enough be taken in, tho it cannot reasonably be imagined, that this is the *main* (much less the *only*) thing intended in the Text. The Souls of the wise Men (yea even the Devils themselves) are thus far wrought for an Everlasting State. But it is not *mere* Immortality, but a *glorious* and *blessed* Immortality that

that's here ſpoken of: So that to be wrought for this ſelf-ſame thing, muſt needs ſignify ſomething peculiar unto true Believers, for they only have a right to the Heavenly Glory: and beſides the Greek word [κατεργασάμενος] ſeems not ſo naturally to ſignify the creating of a Soul, as ſome ſubſequent work upon it already created; to which it's natural eſſence is *preſuppoſed*, not *produced* by it.

(2.) As our *Redeemer*, and the God of governing reconciling Grace, he hath opened the way to Heaven for us, and ſo deals with us upon Terms of Mercy and Compaſſion, in order to our recovery from that ſinful and miſerable ſtate, into which we had brought our ſelves. To this end the Eternal Son of God, in the fulneſs of time ſanctified a Portion of Humane Nature, and took it into union with the Divine, and in it fulfilled all Righteouſneſs, perfectly obeyed the Law, offered up himſelf a Sacrifice to ſatisfy Divine Juſtice, conquered Satan, Death, and Hell; died, aroſe, aſcended, and was glorified, that we might chearfully and believingly follow him. Thus Human Nature in the Perſon of our great Mediatour was wrought through variety of Labours and Sufferings, till it arrived to the higheſt Advancement; that from hence we might be aſſured how great things are intended for us, if we do not reject the Counſel of God againſt our ſelves. *He that ſpared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how ſhall he not with him alſo freely give us all things?* Rom. 8.32. He is gone before to prepare a place for us, and to take poſſeſſion, *&c.* his Arms are ever open to receive returning Sinners; the more weary and heavy laden with the Burden of Sin, the fitter for him to exerciſe his Office upon. He will caſt out none that ſincerely come to him. None are excluded who do not by wilful and final Impenitency exclude themſelves. On his part all things are ready: what then remains but that we thankfully lay hold on this Tree of Life, and by Faith feed thereon, that we may live for ever?

(3.) As he is our *Sanctifier*, and the Applyer and

Perfecter of all to fit us for Glory, he works in the Souls of his People those holy Qualifications, Tendencies, and Affections, whereby the Heavenly State becomes con-natural and agreeable to them, or rather they to *it*. To live, and have a being in a future State is one thing, to be happy therein another. Meer Immortality fits you for the former *immediately*, but only in a more *remote sense* for the latter. O Sirs, it is but cold comfort to know that your Souls are immortal, if in the mean time ye be utterly in the dark, whether it shall be well or ill with them hereafter. Live they must to all Eternity; but if a great deal of care be not taken in time, that Life is like to prove worse than Death. Therefore (ye know) that *Eternal Life* is usually taken in the best sense: Mat. 25. 46. *The Righteous into Life Eternal*. Rom. 6. 23. *The Gift of God is Eternal Life*. Those in Hell live too, because they cannot, not because they would not die: Know then, that your Souls are no less capable of exquisite Torment and Misery, than of Joy and Blessedness in another World; their everlasting Weal or Woe depends more *directly* and *nearly* upon *Moral* Qualities, than upon their *Natural Essence*. As wicked Men are filling up the measure of their Sins, and so making themselves ripe for Ruin, *Treasuring up Wrath against the Day of Wrath*. Rom. 25. So God by his Grace qualifies and prepares his People for Heaven, enabling and habituating them to those spiritual Desires and Endeavours which are suted thereto. Vers. 9. *Wherefore we labour, that whether present, or absent, we may be accepted of him*. Phil. 2. 13. *He worketh in them, both to will and to do of his good Pleasure*. A Work so great that it emulates even Creation it self, insomuch that the Persons thus wrought upon are *new Creatures*, as *vers.* 17. of this Chapter. *If any Man be in Christ, he is a new Creature*; not in point of *Essence* or *Faculties*, but of new *Qualities* and *Dispositions* wherewith they are endued. And thus we must be wrought for this self-same thing. Hence Believers, as such, are called *God's Workmanship*,

created in Christ Jesus unto good Works. Ephes. 2. 10. His Building, raised and framed by him, *for an habitation of God through the Spirit.* Vers. 22. *His Husbandry,* 1 Cor. 3. 9. Being cultivated by him, to bring forth that *Fruit unto Holiness, the end whereof is Everlasting Life.* Rom. 6. 22. Thus *they are the work of his Hands, Trees of Righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.* Isa. 60. 21. Ch. 61. 3. So these Vessels of Mercy, are prepared for Glory. Rom. 8. 23. *Made meet to be Partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light.* Col. 1. 12. *Well set,* or rightly *disposed* for the Kingdom of God. As the word signifies, *Luke* 9. 62. [ευθετος.]

And this it is which the Text *principally* aims at, wherein you may observe several things.

1. That great work whereof the Apostle here speaks as a thing already done. *He that hath wrought,* &c.
2. The Author of this Work, viz. *The Blessed God himself.*
3. The Subjects, or Persons upon whom it was wrought. Namely the Apostle himself, and other Gospel-Ministers, [*Us*] yet not so as to exclude any other Persons, *who had obtained like precious Faith with them,* 2 Pet. 1. 1. Or *that had believed through their Word.* Joh. 17. 20. See the foregoing Chapter, *vers.* 14. as also *Chap.* 1. 21. [*us with you.*]
4. The end and design of this great Work; namely to fit them for Heaven, giving them a Temper suted thereto, and causing them to long after it.
5. The necessity of this great Work, as may be gathered from the Relation which these words bear to the Context. And more especially by the word [now, or but, δε] which connects this Verse with the fore-going, *q. d.* we know that the Heavenly Inheritance shall be ours. And we earnestly de-

ſire to be there, *verſ.* 1, 2. *&c.* But then it muſt be remembred that we are wrought for this ſelf-ſame thing, otherwiſe our Hopes were preſumptuous, our Confidence meer ſelf-deceit. According to which plain Expoſition this little Particle [*for*] is big enough to exclude all *from* Heaven, who are not in ſome meaſure thus wrought *for* it.

And now 'tis obvious, that many points of Doctrine might eaſily be drawn from theſe words, thus opened and divided: But I will mention no more than one, which I deſign to inſiſt upon, and to it all the reſt may be reduced.

Doct. *There's no coming to Heaven, till we be wrought or prepared for it, by the Power of Divine Grace.*

In handling this Point, three things muſt be diſtinctly ſpoken to.

I. The Explication of it, or what it means.
II. The Proof of it, or how it appears.
III. The Uſe and Improvement of it, or what may be deduced from it, either to *inform* our Judgments, or to *direct* and *regulate* our Practice.

As to the firſt of theſe I ſhall proceed as follows.

1. To give you ſome general Account of the Heavenly Felicity for which we muſt be prepared.
2. Set before you a more diſtinct and large Explication, of that great Work of Grace whereby the Souls of Believers are fitted for Glory.

Without ſome competent Knowledg of the *End*, we are not like to underſtand the *Means*: And except we enquire into (yea and chuſe) the Way, we ſhall never come to enjoy the bleſſed End.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

Some general Account of the Heavenly Felicity; to which are ſubjoyned ſome ſhort Hints, how unfit we are by Nature for that bleſſed State, and how we came to be ſo.

'TIS not to be thought ſtrange, that our Conceptions fall exceeding ſhort, and our Expreſſions yet ſhorter, when we come to diſcourſe concerning that Glory, which is within the Vail: Who can, at this diſtance, give any other than a very imperfect Account of that fulneſs of Joy, which is in the Preſence of God, and thoſe everlaſting Pleaſures which are at his Right Hand. *Pſal.* 16. 11.

Yet are we not left wholly in the dark neither, *ſomewhat* of Heaven may be known (and therefore ſhould diligently be enquired after) while we are here on Earth; *all* cannot till we come thither.

At preſent we have ſome Revelation of it, both *objective* and *ſubjective*, *viz.* ſo far as is ſuitable to our preſent State. 'Tis revealed *to us*, *Life and Immortality are brought to light by the Goſpel*, 2 Tim. 1. 10. 'Tis revealed *in us*: true Believers, have the foretaſts of it, in thoſe Exerciſes of Grace which lead to it.

Tho it doth not yet (*fully*) appear what we ſhall be, yet *in part it* doth. For, *we know that when he ſhall appear, we ſhall be like him; for we ſhall ſee him as he is*, 1 Joh. 3. 2. Tho *our Life is hid with Chriſt in God*: Col. 3. 3. Yet not ſo, as if nothing of it could be known, but rather that it might be more earneſtly ſearched after. Even as in him *are hid all the Treaſures*

of

of Wiſdom and Knowledg. Chap. 2. 3. compared wi
Prov. 2. 2, 3, 4. See alſo 1 Cor. 2. 9, 10. *Eye hath no
ſeen, nor Ear heard,* &c. *but God hath revealed them unt
us by his Spirit,*—— verſ. 12. *that we might know th
things that are freely given to us of God.*

Well then, it is a great advantage that we have
Map of the Holy Land; a Deſcription of the New *Je
ruſalem* ſet before us in the Sacred Records: And ye
greater, if we taſte the Sweetneſs, and feel the Powe
of thoſe Goſpel-Diſcoveries in our own Spirits. Bu
then thoſe that do ſo, can hardly make others under
ſtand theſe grateful Reliſhes: The Joys of Believers
are ſuch as Strangers intermeddle not with, cannot be
rightly apprehended but by *inward vital* Senſe and Ex
perience, known only to them that have them: Words
can but faintly expreſs them, *for they are unſpeakable*
1 Pet. 1. 8. How much more inexpreſſible muſt thoſe
Pleaſures be, which, in Heaven, are grown up to full
perfection?

Therefore as to what is unrevealed let us wait a
while, it cannot be long, time runs faſt on, Eternity
is almoſt upon us. The Concerns of our Souls are in
ſafe Hands: "Our Eyes (as one obſerves) are in our
"glorified Head Jeſus Chriſt. He knows for us, what
"we are not yet admitted to the Knowledg of. Let
this quiet us notwithſtanding our remaining Darkneſs:
We are going to the World of Light.

However, in the mean time let us take care that we
be not guilty of any *willful affected* Ignorance in this
Matter. Let not Sloth *prevent*, nor preſumptuous Cu
riosity *pervert* our Enquiries about it. Labour after as
diſtinct and clear a Knowledg of Heaven as you can,
but be ſure to keep cloſe to the Rule.

It ſeems plain from Scripture, (as alſo from the Na
ture of the thing) that the Heavenly Felicity conſiſts
mainly in, or reſults from two things.

1. A perfect fitneſs for the enjoyment of the glori
ous bleſſed God.
2. The actual enjoyment of him.

Theſe

These are most intimately essential to that blessed State, and therefore to be principally considered: Tho there are also certain *adjuncts* and *circumstances* of this Blessedness, which must not be wholly passed by; but of these afterwards. We will begin with the other.

1. A perfect fitness for the enjoyment of God. The faculties of the Soul shall be refined, strengthned, enlarged, repleniſh'd to the utmost of their Capacities, with fulness of Divine Grace, and therein confirmed, and settled past all danger of revolt or decay; and therefore compleatly fitted (subjectively) for Everlasting Communion with the blessed God, their objective Happiness, Portion, ALL. As *Action* and *Fruition* presuppose *Being* and *Nature*, so the perfection of the *former* is necessary to that of the *latter*. The best of Men, while here below, have great remainders of sinful Weakness, all their Graces are enfeebled by a contrary principle of Corruption dwelling in them. Hence it is, that the workings of their Souls towards God are so weak and languid, and the Joys of Communion with him so often interrupted and obscured: But in Heaven it will not be so. There we shall have Strength without Weakness, Light without Darkness, Love without any remaining Aversion. And then 'tis no wonder that we shall have Joy without Sorrow.

I know that some are ignorant and vain enough to talk of a sinless Perfection here on Earth: And once I met with one who had the Face to tell me, that (were it not for a little Passion) for ought he knew, he was perfect. I presently ask'd him, whether he thought he loved God, as well as he ought to love him? This put him to a stand, or rather made him go back from his former Assertion. Alas, how little do such Men know of their own Hearts, or of the Latitude and Extent of the Divine Law! Psal. 119. 96. *Thy Commandment is exceeding broad.*

'Tis very observable that the Scripture has recorded the imperfections of the People of God, even as to those particulars wherein they were most eminent. Thus

Thus Numb. 12. 3. *The Man* Moses *was very meek, above all the Men which were upon the Face of the Earth.* Yet we read, Psal. 106. 33. That *his Spirit was so provoked, that he spake unadvisedly with his Lips.* Insomuch that for this reason he was not permitted to go into the promised Land, *Deut.* 32. 51, 52. I mention not, how that when his anger was hot, he broke the Tables of Stone, written with the Finger of God, *Exod.* 32. 19. because 'tis likely that was done by peculiar Divine Instinct, to shew that rebellious People how unworthy they were of so great a Blessing: And how well they themselves deserved to be broken in pieces, and utterly cast off.

Of *Job* 'tis said in general, Chap. 2. 3. *That there was none like him in the Earth, a perfect and upright Man,* &c. and particularly Jam. 5. 11. *Ye have heard of the Patience of Job.* And have we not heard of his Impatience too? *Chap.* 3. when he cursed his Day, *&c.*

How renowned was *Solomon* for Wisdom! Who yet committed great Folly in *Israel,* even in his Old Age, 1 *Kings* 11. 4, &c.

How remarkably forward and zealous for Christ do we find *Peter* to have been upon many occasions! yet pitifully baffled by two silly Maids one after another, to the denial of his Master. *Mat.* 26. 69, 71.

Thus you see how many strong Ones have fallen, and been wounded, even in those parts where their greatest Strength lay. Is it not then the heighth of Madness (or Fanaticism) to talk of universal Sinless perfection on this side Heaven?

Surely the most able experienc'd Christians speak at another rate. Phil. 3. 12. *Not as tho I had already attained, either were already perfect.* So 1 Joh. 1. 8. *If we say we have no Sin, we deceive our selves, and the truth is not in us.*

But if once we get safe to Heaven, we shall sin no more: Grace will then be grown up to its full maturity; and shall never be weakened by any contrary Principle more. *There are the Spirits of just Men made perfect*

perfect indeed. *Heb.* 12. 23. There are no complaints of dull *Inactivity*, and liſtleſneſs to ſpiritual work. *Paul* is not there crying out (as he doth in that ſorrowful, yet comfortable Chapter. *Rom.* 7.) *Me miſerum! O wretched Man that I am!* &c. *The good that I would, I do not,* ——*I am carnal, ſold under Sin,* ——*Sin dwelleth in me,* ——*Evil is preſent with me,* ——&c. No, no, there's no room for any of this *there.*

All thoſe Clouds of *Darkneſs* and Confuſion wherewith our Minds are ſo over-ſhadowed in this preſent State, will then be quite diſſipated and gone.

The remnants of our *Diſaffection* and Enmity againſt God, which are now the matter or occaſion of our moſt grievous and piercing Complaints, will then be perfectly maſtered, and wrought out.

All theſe Diſtempers will be cured, which muſt needs cauſe ſo great a Pleaſure, as none can have a full notion of but they who feel and poſſeſs it.

Then ſhall we find in our ſelves a fulneſs of Spiritual *Life*, Strength, and Vigour; then ſhall we be ſurrounded with the glorious *Light* of a perfect Day; then ſhall we be perfectly reconciled to the *Love* of the only Soul-ſatisfying Object. No wonder that Sorrow and Sighing are over, when Sin and all the curſed Effects of it, which occaſioned them, are done away.

How great things are ſpoken of the firſt rudiments, and imperfect beginnings of this bleſſed State, in that work of *Grace* which leads to it. The truly Godly even in this Life are *all glorious within*, Pſal. 45. 13. *Changed from Glory to Glory*, 2 Cor. 3. 18. *Partakers of the Divine Nature*, 2 Pet. 1. 4. Thus true Grace is Glory begun in the Soul: And the Relation which it bears to the Heavenly Perfection, to which it is tending, puts an high value upon it. How much more valuable then muſt that Perfection it ſelf be! If the new Creature in its preſent Infant-State be ſo aimable, what will it be when we come to perfect Manhood, when we ſhall arrive to the higheſt pitch of Excellency whereof our Natures are capable; even ſo high as to be com-

pleatly

pleatly qualified for the more *immediate* enjoyment of God himself!

I had almoſt forgot to mention that our *Bodies ſhall be raiſed*, ſpiritualized, *and made like unto Chriſt's glorious Body*. As to which I ſhall only ſay, that ſuitable Object will not be wanting to the Organs or Powers wherewith they ſhall be endued.

Finally, tho it will remain true to all Eternity, that we were once Sinners, yet 'twill be as true, that we are pardoned and reconciled through Chriſt, and therefore that the Guilt of our Sins ſhall never ſeparate between us and our God, or make us unfit for Communion with him any more.

2. The actual Enjoyment of God. This it is which muſt compleat the Happineſs of the Soul; for this end it was prepared by Grace, and advanced to that high Perfection in Glory, whereof we have been ſpeaking, *viz.* that it might perfectly enjoy the moſt glorious perfect God.

Under this Head there are two things which muſt be *diſtinctly* conſidered, tho they cannot be *really* divided.

1. The lively actings of the Soul towards God.
2. Its conſtant reception of Communications from him.

1. All the Faculties and Powers of the perfected Soul ſhall be taken up with God, acting towards him, terminating upon him, reſting in him.

The *Underſtanding* ſhall be employ'd in contemplating the glorious Excellencies of the Divine Nature; His *Power*, *Wiſdom*, *Goodneſs*, his *Truth* and *Faithfulneſs*, his *glorious Holineſs*, that Attribute of Attributes (as one calls it) which runs as it were through all the reſt, and caſts a Glory upon every one, Exod. 15. 11. *Glorious in Holineſs*; his awful Majeſtick *Sovereignty*, &c. all theſe will then appear to open view. 'Twere eaſy to enlarge upon each of theſe, and 'tis fit you ſhould do ſo; let me help you a little.

His Power] by which he made the World, ſtretched out

out the Heavens, laid the Foundations of the Earth, or hanged it upon nothing, poiſed by its own weight, ſet bounds to the proud waves of the Sea, and reſtrained the madder Rage of the tumultuous People. Yea, that Power whereby he firſt drew them unto Chriſt, and made them willing in the Day of their Eſpouſals with him: Even that *exceeding greatneſs of his Power, according to the working of the might of his Power.* Epheſ. 1. 19. and by which they have been kept through Faith unto Salvation.

His Wiſdom] that appears ſo eminently in the Order and Harmony of all his Works: And particularly which framed and contrived the wonderful Deſign of our Redemption by Jeſus Chriſt. This manifold Wiſdom of God which the Angels deſire to look into, will then ſhine forth conſpicuouſly to the raviſhing of all the Beholders, eſpecially thoſe who have ſhared moſt deeply in the bleſſed Effects of it.

His Goodneſs] an Attribute which he delights to honour. Thus when *Moſes* prays, Exod. 33. 18. *I beſeech thee ſhew me thy Glory:* verſ. 19. He ſaid, *I will make all my Goodneſs paſs before thee*, &c. Thus we read of *the Riches of his Goodneſs*, Rom. 2. 4. And that *none is good ſave one, that is God*, Luk. 18. 19. O how lovely and attractive will the Divine Goodneſs appear to us in all the various Aſpects, and Manifeſtations of it, when we come to Heaven! Verily, if there could be any room for Grief in thoſe Regions of Bleſſedneſs, it muſt certainly ariſe from the remembrance of the many Affronts and Indignities which we had formerly put upon this bleſſed Attribute, by ſlighting, undervaluing, or entertaining mean, low, narrow thoughts of it, *&c.* But *here*, as Goodneſs will triumph in overlooking the Contempts which have been put upon it, ſo it will not ſuffer us to diſquiet our ſelves about them.

The Glory of *his Truth* and *Faithfulneſs* will appear, in the fulfilling of thoſe exceeding great and precious Promiſes which he made, *The True and Faithful God:* And particularly in this, that he never ſuffered us *to be tempted*

tempted above what we were able, 1 Cor. 10. 13. How will this be admired, when we are got safe out of the reach of all Temptations?

The Excellency of *Holiness* will then be known in that Holy Place: and the Divine Majesty for ever adored by his holy Ones. But I must not stay to enlarge upon these. I have shewed you the way, exercise your own Thoughts, and you cannot want Matter. Only see that your Hearts be suitably affected as you go on.

Thus the Eyes of our Understandings being opened, strengthned, enlarged, shall for ever feed upon the Divine Glory. Faith will be turned into Vision, we shall walk by sight.

Stop here a little, and consider what you have been reading,—— How pleasant a thing is knowledg to the Soul, tho it be but that of inferior Objects? But how much more delightful will it be to know him, who is the Fountain of Being, the Cause of Causes, the Spring of Action, the Source and Original of all Perfection, the everlasting *I AM?* What is all other Knowledg to be compared to this? Then shall the Eye be satisfied with seeing; and our Joy (not Sorrow) encreased by our Knowledg.

What we know of God in our present state, is next to nothing in comparison of what we shall *then* know. We now see but darkly, as in a Glass; our Thoughts of God are weak, confused, and childish, as the Apostle speaks, 1 *Cor.* 13. 11, 12. But when that which is perfect is come, these childish things must be put away, and a more noble manly Knowledg succeed in their room. A sight of his Back-parts is now no small Privilege, but his Face shall then be seen. *Exod.* 33. 23.

Moreover, our Knowledg shall be transforming, our Eye shall affect our Hearts, or (as a Learned Man expresseth it) we shall look our selves into his Likeness. Psal. 17. 15. *I will behold thy Face——I shall be satisfied with thy Likeness.* 1 Joh. 3. 2. *We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.*

If after all this, you desire to know whether we shall immediately behold the pure Essence of God: I answer, stay till you come thither: 'tis certain that we shall see him in his wonderful Works, we shall see him in our glorified Head. *Who is the brightness of his Glory, and the express Image of his Person.* Heb. 1. 3. But as for the very Essence of God, whether we shall behold that, I cannot tell; but for many Reasons strongly incline to the Negative.

Our Wills shall for ever cleave unto God as the most amiable perfect Good *in himself*, and the most suitable Good *for us*: And, as such, we shall love him, and rest in him with the highest Delight and Complacency. Our Hearts will be entirely and unchangably fixed and determined for God: There will be no idolatrous dividing of them between Him and the Creature. We shall love him with a full and perfect Freedom of Spirit, and yet be sweetly constrained thereto by an happy Necessity. It will then be as easy (and infinitely more pleasant) to love him, as now it is to love our selves, our own Felicity, or our dearest Friends. To live with him, and in him, will be our very Element. To breath is not more natural here on Earth, than to love God will be in Heaven. Indeed nothing else will there be valued (no not our own selves) but in him, and for him. Then will the rich and mighty Sense of those glorious words be felt, and therefore understood, 1 Joh. 4. 16. *God is* LOVE; *and he that dwelleth in Love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.* Then shall we *be filled with all the Fulness of God.* Eph. 3. 19. The more we love him, the more we shall enjoy him. This holy Love is the end of Vision. and therefore rather to be called Beatifick than *it*. The Acts of the Understanding are in order to those of the Will, and the Divine Glory in the compleat Blessedness of his Holy Ones the End of *both*.

* 'Tis the Saying of a great Divine [Mr. *Baxter*] You are deceived, if you think that any one Notion

" speaketh more to you of Heaven, and of your ultimate End, than the *LOVE of GOD*.

Then will the weary Soul be at rest, and never more disturbed with fruitless Desires and Endeavours after things which cannot profit: It hath now found its Center; no more of broken Cisterns, 'tis got to the Fountain of living Waters: It can now say, *I am at last*, I have enough, I have *all*.

If all Love *have* (or rather *is*) Complacency and Delight in the very nature of it, as St. *Augustine*, and many others after him observe. O how pleasant will it be, perfectly to love, so perfect, so glorious an Object! The God of Love fit us for it: The more we love him, the nearer are we to Heaven: Be sure you remember *that*, or else I lose my labour, ye your Souls.

As for the *vital* Power of the Soul, that acteth both in the workings of the Understanding and Will, and makes them *lively* and vigorous; and will be ever ready to yield obedience to the Divine Pleasure, every thing of Duty will be con-natural to it.

2. The perfected Soul shall receive everlasting Influences and Communications from God: Its most enlarged Capacities shall be compleatly filled. As in the first formation of the new Creature, we are first *acted* by the Grace and Power of God, and then act towards him, and by so acting, are fitted to receive more from him: so will it be when we come to Heaven. The glorious perfected Soul is a Creature still; and therefore holds its ALL, in full dependence upon its God: it offers nothing to him but what it hath first received from him. He is the *Alpha* and *Omega*, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last; the Fountain of that Blessed LIFE by which it lives: In his LIGHT it sees Light, and by the continual effusions of his LOVE shed abroad upon it, 'tis constrained to love him; His mighty Hand enables it to bear this weight of Glory; the Light wherein it rejoyceth is that of his Countenance, and his attractive Love determines it to himself: It owns him in all, and is ever wrapt up

the highest admiration of condescending Goodness. 'Tis more sensible than ever of its own nothingness, as it is that God is *All in All*. As Heaven is a State of the *highest Advancement*, so it is of the *deepest Humility*. "The nearer they are to God (says one) the more "apprehensive of their distance. For (as the same Reverend Person [Mr. *Howe*] observes elsewhere) "the distance even of a glorified Creature, from the "Glorious God, is still infinitely greater than between "it, and the filliest Worm, the minutest Atom of "Dust. Hence we find that even the Seraphims veil their Faces before the infinite Majesty. Isa. 6. 2. *The Four and Twenty Elders fall down before him, and cast their Crowns before his Throne, worshipping him that liveth for ever and ever.* Rev. 4. 10, 11. Chap. 5. 14. Thus run the Triumphant Praises of the New *Jerusalem*, *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy Name give Glory.*

Such are the *Exercises*, such the *Fruitions* of those blessed Souls, who *have washed their Robes, and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb.* Rev. 7. 14, 15. &c. Such is the Glory to which they are advanced, tho they were sometimes afar off, as well as we: Now they are near indeed, they stand in his Presence, and he that sits upon the Throne dwells among them; they know him, love him, and live to him, and feel by inward, sweet, vital Experience, that they are *known* of him, *beloved* by him, and that he *lives* in them.

As for the Adjuncts, and concurrent Circumstances, &c. of this blessed State, I shall only say,

The *Place* is *glorious*. The Throne of the Eternal God. Isa. 66. 1. *Thus saith the Lord, The Heaven is my Throne.* Thus the Great Mediatour, Rev. 3. 21. *To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my Throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his Throne.* The light of the Sun or Moon will be needless here, *for the Glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the Light thereof.* Chap. 21. 23.

The Society will be suitable, even Angels and glorified

fied Saints, all whose Happiness will be *ours*, and ours *theirs*; for narrow Selfishness hath no place *there*.

But that which crowns all the rest is, this Blessedness shall be *Eternal*; Rev. 3. 12. *Him that overcometh will I make a Pillar in the Temple of my God, and HE SHALL GO NO MORE OUT.* O blessed Words! and thrice blessed State! Happy they that are safe landed; all dangers are over with them for ever. I cannot name it without fear of missing it, yet I have Hope. The Lord forgive the Remnants of *Unbelief*, *Faintness*, and *Impatience*, that are in us: We would needs have the Crown without overcoming: God help us patiently to wait, and quietly to trust our Almighty, All-wise, and most gracious Guide. *Thou shalt guide me with thy Counsel, and afterward receive me to Glory.* Psal. 73. 24. *If any Man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my Servant be; if any Man serve me, him will my Father honour.* John 12. 26. Therefore let us *not be slothful, but Followers of them, who through Faith and Patience inherit the Promises*, Heb. 6. 12.

Thus I have given you a poor, weak, imperfect Account of the Heavenly Felicity: Nevertheless from what hath been said, 'tis easy to infer, how utterly unfit the best of us were (and all unregenerate Persons still are) *by Nature* for this blessed State; nor will it be amiss to make some enquiry, how the Nature of Man came to be so corrupted, and ill-disposed to its Supreme Happiness, and Ultimate End? Of both these briefly, because it will prepare you to understand what is to come after.

1. 'Tis manifest that unregenerate Persons, *as such*, and therefore all of them are utterly unfit for Heaven. This is a most evident Truth; he that runs may read it: Even they themselves might easily discern it, were they not blinded, and befooled by their Lusts. One would think it should not (I am sure it ought not) escape their Notice, how averse their Hearts are from God, Christ, Holiness, and by consequence from Heaven

ven; tho ſomething there is (but they know not well what) which they pretend to deſire under that *Name*: Carnal they are, and therefore ſavour not the things of the Spirit. The Spirit of their Minds is *inwardly* and *deeply* diſaffected towards God, Enmity (even in the *Abſtract*) againſt him; alienated from him; no Pulſe, no Breathing, no Tendency towards him; they care not for coming near him, but gladly would (if they knew how) ſecure themſelves from him. Their Thoughts and Affections are taken up with other Objects; their Time and Strength are laid out in pampering, and caring for that Fleſh which they carry to and fro with them; and therefore they love the World as affording ſutable Proviſion for it: But the love of the Father is not in them. *This their Way is their Folly; yet their Poſterity approve their Sayings.* Pſal. 49. 13.

And now, judg ye, whether ſuch Perſons be fit for the Heavenly State or no, review the Deſcription which hath been given of it. What! Shall Men imagin themſelves meet for the Enjoyment of God, ſo long as they hate him, induſtriouſly exclude him from their Thoughts; avoid all Acquaintance with him, prefer the moſt empty Trifles before him, perſiſt in wilful Rebellion againſt him? How ſhould this be? At how vaſt a diſtance are ſuch Men from Happineſs! "Cer-"tainly (as one ſays) the Notion and Nature of Bleſ-"ſedneſs muſt be changed, or elſe the Temper of their "Spirits; either they muſt have new Hearts created, or "a new Heaven if ever they be happy.

2. Let us enquire a little how the Nature of Man came to be ſo depraved and unfit for its Happineſs and End. Certain we are that from the beginning it was not ſo. *God made Man upright:* but he quickly loſt his Integrity, by with-drawing himſelf from his dear Dependance *upon*, and Subjection *to* his Maker; he would needs have his Concerns in his own Hands, and be at his own diſpoſal: Thus he ſought out many Inventions, changed his ultimate End, fell from God to himſelf, and ſo became *unholy* and *unhappy* both at once;

and was upon the very brink of the extremeſt Misery, and paſt all hope of recovery, if Infinite Wiſdom and Goodneſs had not ſtept in to his Relief.

Thus *by one Man Sin entered into the World:* by this woful Apoſtacy human Nature became ſo corrupted; this it was that introduced thoſe wretched Diſtempers of Spirit, which make Men ſo unfit for Heaven, as ye have heard. Hence it is *that by Nature we are Children of Wrath. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?* Our firſt Parents could not tranſmit to their Poſterity, that Holineſs and Purity of Nature, even that Holy Image of God which they had loſt themſelves. Therefore we are eſtranged from God even from the Womb, *ſhapen in Iniquity, and conceived in Sin:* And for that reaſon not fit for the Heavenly Glory, till we have received a new Nature, *i. e.* till we be *wrought for the ſelf-ſame thing.*

So neceſſary it is that a mighty Change paſs upon us, to prepare us for a bleſſed Eternity: And indeed the very Nature of that change is not obſcurely intimated, and pointed at in what has been ſpoken: Which now we come more largely and diſtinctly to treat of.

CHAP. III.

A further Enquiry into the Nature of that great Change, whereby the Souls of Believers are wrought and prepared for Heaven.

I Know not who thou art that readeſt theſe Lines, but if this kind of Doctrine ſeem ſtrange or uncouth to thee, (as moſt things do that are not after the common Mode) I counſel thee to ſhut the Book, ſtop

little; and before thou proceedeſt any further, conſider well what thou haſt read already, particularly what hath been delivered concerning the *Bleſſedneſs of Holy Souls in Heaven*; namely, that it conſiſts in a perfect fitneſs for the Enjoyment of God, and in the actual Enjoyment of him; in knowing him, loving him, delighting and reſting in him, admiring, adoring, ſerving and praiſing him to all Eternity, and in receiving the moſt ſweet and refreſhing Influences and Communications from him.

Digeſt this well, form as diſtinct a conception of it as thou canſt. And then put the Queſtion to thy own Reaſon: What kind of preparation ſeems neceſſary to fit a Man for ſuch an Happineſs as this? And eſpecially ask thy ſelf, how ſhould a Man's Heart be diſpoſed and affected towards God in this World, that he may be qualified for perfect Happineſs, and reſt in the Enjoyment of God in a better World? Think well how thou wouldſt anſwer this Queſtion, as if it were for thy Life; yea know that the Life of thy Soul is concerned in it.

This (by God's Bleſſing) will prepare thee to underſtand, and believe, what I am about to offer to thee. But if thou wilt not exerciſe thy Reaſon as a *Man*, I expect not thou ſhould'ſt become a ſincere *Chriſtian*: For let me tell thee, ſerious Godlineſs, or true Chriſtianity, is the moſt rational manly thing in the World.

And now I proceed to the Point, in the following method.

I. I will ſet before you ſome general Account of the Nature of this great Change.

II. I will endeavour to ſhew you more diſtinctly the ſeveral ſteps whereby this bleſſed Work is begun, carried on, and perfected in the Soul.

As for the firſt of theſe, in general, you may obſerve as follows.

1. This great change consists in turning unto the *LORD*, from whom we have so deeply revolted. We fell from God in the Loins of our first Parents (as *Levi* payed Tithes in *Abraham*, *Heb.* 7. 9, 10.) We brought not original Righteousness (but Natures exceedingly corrupted) into the World with us; and many *actual* Transgressions have proceeded from that Corruption, so that our Iniquity is become exceeding sinful; therefore we must be deeply humbled for the Wickedness of our Hearts and Lives, and so return unto the Lord from whom we are fallen. Isa. 55. 7. *Let the Wicked forsake his way, and the Unrighteous Man his Thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord*, &c. Chap. 1. 16, 17, 18. *Wash ye, make you clean, put away the Evil of your doings: —cease to do Evil, learn to do well: —Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD.* Ezek. 33. 11. *As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no Pleasure in the death of the wicked; — turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die.* O Sirs, ye must turn, or die. All your Idols must be renounced, especially carnal SELF, to which the rest are subservient. Whatever stands in *Competition* or *Contrariety* to God, so far as it doth so, must be rejected with the greatest Abhorrence and Detestation, that you may cleave *entirely* to him.

They that are far from God, shall perish, Psal. 73. 27. You must be brought near to him, or else you cannot possibly escape: none but he can satisfy the vast Desires of your Souls; how then should ye be happy while ye affect a distance from him: 'Tis a perfect Contradiction, as shall be shewn in its proper place.

All our *Faculties* and *Powers* must be wrought upon, or influenced by this great Change.

1. The Soul is naturally a *vital active* Substance, as appears by the Vigour and Sprightliness of its Motions: yea the best Philosophy supposeth that it is never out of action. But what then? Towards God 'tis *inactive*, *stupid*, *dead*. And therefore it must be *quickned* by the same Power, which raised up Jesus Christ from the dead, *Ephes.* 1. 19, 20. *Ch.* 2. 1, 4, 5, 6. It is

vital

vital Power must be further enlivened, by a new Principle of Divine Spiritual Life, that it may be enabled and inclined to move readily, strongly, constantly towards God, *from* whom this Spiritual Life is derived, through Christ, and therefore it acts *towards* him, and terminates *in* him, the same way: Thus the active Power must be sanctified, *that we may be strong in the Lord, and in the Power of his Might*, Ephes. 6. 10.

Observe therefore, that this *vital* Faculty of the Soul is no less capable of being improved, corroborated, or strengthened by holy Habits, than either of the other two, viz. The *Understanding* and *Will*; tho these are commonly most taken notice of; it is an essential Power or Virtue of the Soul, as well as they. It suscitates them to action, and communicates Life and Vigour to them (*ad intra*;) as it executes the Commands of the Will, directed by the Understanding (*ad extra:*) The former sort of these Acts lying deep and inward are less observed, (and by many scarce at all) the latter (viz. the *Executive* Acts) are more open and discernable.

Therefore this vital active Power must be wrought to an holy Vivacity or Livelines for God, that we may move towards him, and for him, *readily*, with Promptitude and Quickness of Spirit: And not be Lazy or Listless *to* Duty; *strongly*, with holy Fortitude and Vigour, and not be formal, lifeless, or indifferent *in* Duty. What a Shame is it that Men should pretend to have Heaven in their Eye, and yet stand still, or move so slowly, as if they cared not whether ever they got thither or no? *constantly*, with an holy Steadfastness, not discouraged by difficulties that arise in the way, not fainting, nor weary of well doing.

2. The Soul is naturally an *Intelligent* Being, capable of enquiring after Truth, yea, and strongly enclined so to do. All Men are desirous of Knowledg, in one kind or other; some vehemently set upon it, and very industrious and eager in their Pursuits after it; they compass Sea and Land to attain it, and highly value themselves upon it.

But

But then, as to the things of God, Matters of Spiritual and Eternal Consequence, we are by Nature not only ignorant of them, but strangely blockish and indisposed to a right Acquaintance with them. We not only want the *actual* Knowledg of them, but also a due *aptitude* and *fitness* to know them: Hence you shall find many Persons, who as to other Matters are very quick and apprehensive, but in a perfect Mist as to those Truths wherein the Welfare of their Souls is more immediately concerned; yea, Multitudes there are, who have sate so long under the Means of Knowledg, that it might justly be expected they should be able to teach others, but yet are themselves so dull, that they have need to be taught again which be the *first Principles of the Oracles of God.* Heb. 5. 11, 12. Others there are, who have, indeed, a *Form of Knowledg.* Rom. 2. 20. (and it may be a Form of Godliness too) but not the Power of it: Many superficial Notions floating in their Imaginations, and not a little puff'd up with them. Tho still they know nothing as they ought to know. Some Acquaintance they have with *Words* or *Signs*, but are Strangers to the *Things signified* by them. They know not the truth as it is in Jesus, to the putting off of the Old Man. *Ephes.* 4. 21, 22. They may seem to have learned a great deal *extensively*, but *intensively* they have learn'd nothing. The Articles of their professed Creed, are not in their Faith, unless dreaming might pass for believing. Isa. 53. 1. *Who hath believed our Report?* 1 Cor. 2. 14. *The natural Man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God*, &c. *In seeing they see not; neither do they understand.* Mat. 13. 13.

Thus the State of Unregeneracy is a State of Darkness; even such as might be felt, were they not past feeling too: They are not only in the Dark, but they are *Darkness.* *Ephes.* 5. 8. An impure Mass of conglomerated Darkness; as one expresses it.

But when it pleaseth God by the Power of his Grace to work savingly upon a Soul, he causeth his Light to shine out of Darkness, irradiates the Understanding,

and

and enables it to discern spiritual things in a spiritual manner. This is done by the special Illumination or powerful Demonstration of the Spirit: This produceth new Apprehensions of things. The Man sees with other Eyes, and knows to purpose what he only thought he knew before. The Lord hath given him *an Heart to perceive*, Deut. 29. 4. he is now convinced that *Jesus Christ is the chiefest among ten Thousand*, ——*altogether lovely*, Cant. 5. 10, 16. Tho formerly he could see *no Form nor Comliness in him*. Isa. 53. 2. Now the Beauty of Holiness appears, and he is even amazed at himself to think that he saw it no sooner.

Thus Divine Light breaks in upon the Understanding, the Day-spring from an high visits it, *The new Man is renewed in Knowledg*. Col. 3. 10. Turning unto God is a *rational intelligent* Act, sincere Religion moves not blindly. But that brings me to another Head.

3. The main point in this great Change is yet behind, I mean the Sanctification of the *Will*: This is the Faculty which stands it out the longest against God; being most wickedly averse from him, and therefore hardliest brought to yield to the Importunities of his Grace. *Ye will not come to me, that ye might have Life. How often would I have gathered thy Children together, even as a Hen gathereth her Chickens under her Wings, and ye would not!* Mat. 23. 37. *My People would not hearken to my Voice: And* Israel *would none of me.*

'Tis in this unwillingness that their Impotency doth mainly consist, they cannot find in their Hearts to comply. O what deep Convictions, what Fears and Terrours, what Pangs and Throws, what vehement Strugglings do some undergo before they yield! And some who never yield at all! Their faint Inclinations to that which is good, are over-powered by a more strong Aversion; thus the rebellious Will of Man stands it out against the Law and Grace of God. 'Tis a far easier matter to convince Men's Understandings, of the reasonableness and necessity of turning to God, than to cure

cure that Disaffection and Enmity which is rooted in their Wills and Hearts against him. Therefore, I say, the main Work lies here, *viz.* In turning the bent of the Will, and putting it in a right posture God-ward; determining our Resolutions for him; *powerfully* and *sweetly* enclining us to close with him; drawing, and even constraining us with the Cords of a Man, the Bands of Love: working our Hearts to that temper wherein the Psalmist's Words are very expressive, Psal. 73. 25. *WHOM HAVE I IN HEAVEN but Thee?* &c. When this is done, then is the Heart of the Old Man broken, then the Soul stands no longer at such an unkind distance from God as it did before. But being begotten of him, hath an ingenious Child-like Affection towards him. O my God, I can resist no longer; thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed; thy Love hath overcome me, victorious Grace has got the day. *Other Lords, besides thee, have had Dominion over me: But by Thee only will I make mention of thy Name.* Isa. 26. 13. Thus they cry, *Abba, Father*, and feel at length how good it is *to draw near to God.* Psal. 73. 28.

In this it is that true Grace, *Holiness*, or *real* Godliness doth principally consist: Namely in such an inclination of the Will towards God; it is the giving our Hearts to him which before were most unreasonably and wickedly alienated from him. 'Tis this which he doth especially call for, insist upon, and expect from us; this he sets most by, and without it will not accept of any thing else that we can offer. Prov. 23. 26. *My Son, give me thine Heart.* This *is more than all whole Burnt-offerings and Sacrifices*, Mark. 12. 33. Thus the wandering Soul is brought back to its proper Center and Rest.

'Tis an honest Friendly good-natured Disposition of Heart God-wards, always tempered with dutiful Reverence to so adorable a Majesty; who needeth not such poor silly Worms as we, *but will be gracious to whom he will be gracious, and will shew Mercy on whom he will shew Mercy.* Exod. 33. 19. Thus the design of the Gospel

Gospel is to bring us into *Fellowship with God.* 1 John 1. 3. That henceforth we may converse with him as our best and dearest Friend. And confidently expect from him all that Kindness and Faithfulness which belongs to such a Relation; and what may we not hope for from such a Friend, such a Father? Nothing shall be wanting that's fit for him to give, or for us to receive. Luk. 15. 31. *Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.* The Love of God to his People (as one observes) cannot be overset, it knows no difficulties. The greater the Performance or Vouchsafement, the more suitable to Divine Love.

Again, this great Change is an opening of our Hearts towards God, which before were shy, reserved, estranged, shut up against him. Tho they were always his by *Title*, yet not till now by *Consent*; before, he had (*jus ad rem*) a right *to* them; now, he hath (*jus in re*) an actual Interest *in* them, and Possession of them. The Everlasting Doors are now opened, and the King of Glory is entered in. *Psal.* 24. Thus we give unto God the things that are God's.

How shall I make it plainer? 'Tis a sincere, deep, inward, hearty, prevailing Love to him, who is *Love* and *Goodness* it self. This is the Life and Substance of all true Religion, the fulfilling of the Law in one Word, *LOVE*. Without this thou hast only the shadow of Holiness, but *really* art nothing, 1 *Cor.* 13. 2.

The Truth is, the Will is the first *Subject* of moral Good and Evil: 'Tis turned from God by Sin, yea and set against him. Grace reduceth and reconciles it to him again; so that the tendencies of the renewed Soul are towards God, that it may know him more, love and serve him better, be brought yet nearer to him; and more fully conformed to his Will. It detests all thoughts of Happiness in which the Enjoyment of God is not included; or rather which is not wholly included in that Enjoyment. "He says unto the Lord, "Thou art my God, I cannot take up with any thing

"else

" else for my Portion and Supreme Good; my Soul
" panteth after thee, longeth for thee, and is even
" weary of it self to find any Remnants of its old A-
" version from thee. These are my daily Groans, O
" that I could ascend more! Send forth, O Lord, thy
" powerful attractive Love, let that holy Flame con-
" sume my Dross, that the nobler part may know its
" home, its rest, its all. How precious are thy Thoughts
" unto me, O God, how great is the sum of them!
" I knew in some measure long since that none but
" God could make me compleatly happy, I have often
" heard of this by the hearing of the Ear, but now I
" know it better, mine Eye sees it, I find and feel that
" my Soul is otherwise affected towards thee than it
" was before.

Thus the Passage betwixt the Head and Heart is o-
pened, thus the Will is determined for God: And
those Truths which before only hovered in the Brain,
or Imagination, sink down, work into the very Soul,
and attemper it to themselves.

I have been somewhat large upon this Head, but all's
little enough to make unregenerate Persons understand
these things, tho still they pretend to love God. But
I proceed:

4. The sensitive Passions or Affections must also be
sanctified, so as to fall in with the superior Faculties
(especially the Will) and be subservient to them, in
order to the great Ends of Holiness or Religion. That
is, they must be devoted unto God, exercised upon
him and for him. The rational and sensitive Appetite
are so nearly connexed, at least in this Life, that the
Acts of the *former* (so far as we perceive them) al-
ways take in somewhat of the *latter*, and are com-
monly described accordingly.

Moreover, the Passions of Affections are oft-times an
occasion, or *means*, to awaken and excite our *Reason* and
Will to do their duty; and therefore of exceeding great
use, if rightly managed and improved.

And tho the great Work of Grace lies principally
in

in the higher Faculties of the Soul, as *Intellectual*: Namely in the *vita Active Powers*, *Understanding* and *WILL*: And muſt there be *mainly* ſought and enquired after. *viz.* Whether we have an high Eſtimation of God, and do reſolvedly and rationally cleave to him, endeavouring to act ſuitably in our Lives and Converſations, *&c.*

Again, tho it muſt be granted that our Paſſions are not ſo apt to be moved by ſpiritual and invisible Objects as by ſenſible things that are near us, *&c.* and withal, that *they* are many times ſtrongeſt, where Judgment is weakeſt, and very uncertain too, as depending much upon the Conſtitution of the Body, *&c.*

Yet, I muſt needs ſay, that thoſe Perſons whoſe Affections move ſenſibly and freely toward other things, but ſcarce ſtir at all as to the beſt and higheſt Objects, are certainly in a weak and languid State of Soul, if not quite dead.

If we be indeed riſen with Chriſt; then, as we *ought*, ſo we *ſhall*, in ſome meaſure, *ſet our Affections on things above*, Col. 3. 1, 2. If the Will be predominantly for God, 'tis not to be ſuppoſed but that the Affections will in ſome degree go along with it, and if they move but ſlowly, it will be matter of Grief, and will put us upon earneſt Strivings to raiſe them to a better Frame.

'Tis paſt doubt that true Grace tends in its own Nature to heal all the Diſeaſes of the Soul, to rectify all its Faculties and Powers, and ſo the Paſſions and Affections amongſt the reſt: That is, to take them off from wrong Objects, to moderate their Exceſſes, to turn them into a right Channel; nor are theſe tendencies fruitleſs, the Effect is, in part accompliſht. So far as this great Change takes place and prevails in the Soul, the Affections of *Love*, *Deſire*, *Joy*, *Delight*, *Hatred*, *Sorrow*, *Fear*, and the reſt, will be moving towards their proper Objects and Ends. We ſhall hate and abhor what is diſpleaſing to God; mourn that we have ſo often offended; earneſtly deſire to be accepted

with

with him; and to enjoy more of him, hunger and thirst after Righteousness. And therefore, we must strive to love God more feelingly, and so to rejoice and delight in him; and tho many Impediments and Difficulties arise in our way, yet still Grace will be tending to these things. And we are greatly wanting to our selves, if we do not daily endeavour to stir up the Grace of God that is in us, that all the Powers of our Souls may be quickened more and more in their Motions by it: If we stay till our Affections stir of themselves, we may wait long enough. 'Tis our part *actively* to concur *with* and *by* that gracious Help which is afforded us, in order to the quickening and spiritualizing of them, and bringing them more under the command of the Will, till at length they be accustomed and inured to move more *naturally*, *freely* and *strongly* Heaven-ward.

Nor must we faint or be discouraged tho we find our Hearts sluggish and averse to such work as this: We must persist in duty notwithstanding this Indisposition. And wait for God's Help in his own way: Yea we must cast our selves into his Arms, tho he may seem, as it were, to shut up himself from our Prayers, and to withhold the sweet Influences of his Grace. It may be he withdraws to see how we will take it; shall we not lament (and follow so much the harder) after him? what tho we have not sensible Comfort, let us stay our selves on him; and *against Hope believe in Hope*. Rom. 4. 18. Duties are sweet when recovered out of the Hand of Temptations and Difficulties; we are bound, but God is free: What you want as to the *feeling* of Affection, make out in *deep* and *rational* Resolutions for God, and ye will get ground even while ye think ye lose it.

5. Even the Body it self must be sanctified, that is, presented or devoted unto God, and used for him. *This is the Will of God, that every one of us possess his Vessel in Sanctification.* 1 Thess. 4. 3, 4. *That Sin reign not in our Mortal Body, but that we yield our Members as Instruments*

Instruments of Righteousness unto God. Rom. 6. 13, 19. *Our Bodies are for the Lord,* ——*they are Members of Christ,* &c. 1 Cor. 6. 13, 15. *Temples of the Holy-Ghost,* vers. 19. The Body must be used as a Servant to the Soul, and both employed in the Service of God. 1 Cor. 6. 20. *Glorify God in your Body, and in your Spirit which are God's.* 'Tis true indeed that bodily Exercise profiteth little, *without* or *in comparison* of that which is spiritual. 1 *Tim.* 4. 8. To bow the Knee, while our Spirits remain stubborn and unbroken. To lift up our Eyes Heaven-ward, if our Souls be not also lifted up. To draw nigh to God with our Lips when our Hearts are far from him, is an Addition of Hypocrisy to all the rest of our Iniquity. But on the other hand, 'tis as true that if our Souls be for God, our Bodies will be subservient to them, and their Members accordingly used by them. The Eyes will be opened to behold the wonderful Discoveries which he hath made of himself in his Works, and in his Word: The Ears to hear the Instructions of Wisdom: The Lips to praise and magnify him, and by spiritual Discourse to edify others, feed many, and minister Grace to the Hearers.

Therefore, tho our Hearts must be first look'd at in the Service of God. Yet care must also be taken that our Words and Deportment be also suitable and becoming; because outward Worship is *expressive* of that which is inward, and reflects back again upon the Heart it self: As Habits are strengthened and increased by the Acts which flow from them; so are internal Affections by correspondent Expressions and Behaviour in Duty. Tho we must not so cry up and magnify the Externals of Worship, as to overlook the inward Life and Soul of it, as Hypocrites who love to be seen of Men are wont to do. So on the other Hand, we ought not to pretend our good Meanings or Spirituality in Divine Worship, to excuse us from befitting Gestures or outward Demeanour therein: Nor must we be forward to judg and censure others, as if they were meer

Ceremonious Hypocrites, because they seem to put Religion into a more fine or formal dress, than we our selves have been used to. In short, let us neither be *rude* nor *antick* in Matters of this Nature; but let the Frame of our Spirits, as also our Words and Gestures be *reverent*, *grave* and *serious*, lest we be found guilty of prophaning holy things. God is to be worshipped by the whole Man.

Thus ye see that our *intellectual* and *sensitive* Faculties, yea and our Bodies too must according to their several Capacities be all sanctified and devoted unto God. Which is fully comprehended in those Words of the Apostle, 1 Thess. 5. 23. *And the very God of Peace sanctify you wholly: And I pray God your whole SPIRIT, and SOUL, and BODY be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Thus much for the first Head, *viz.* That this great Change consists in turning unto the Lord from whom we have so deeply revolted.

II. Since it is only in and through Jesus Christ that God is reconcilable to fallen Man, 'tis highly necessary that we have a due regard to him in this Matter.

Joh. 14. 6. *No Man cometh unto the Father but by me.* So *vers.* 19. of this Chapter, *God was in Christ reconciling the World unto himself. Neither is there Salvation in any other.* Acts 4. 12. As God himself is our *ultimate* End, so Jesus Christ is the principal means and way to bring us to that End. The Will of God is so fully declared in this Point, *viz.* That we can have no access to the Father but by the Son, that it would be insolent daring Presumption for us to attempt it any other way. Never think of approaching the Presence of God, transacting with him, presenting your selves or services to him, or of expecting any Favour from him, but *in* and *through* Christ. Joh. 5. 23. *He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.* 'Tis therefore requisite that we set an high value upon this great Mediatour, that we dearly love him, and sincerely commit our selves

to

rohis Conduct, that he may bring us to God: for all the Divine Favours and Blessings are communicated to us through Christ, *Ephes.* 1. 3. 2 *Pet.* 1. 3. So we our selves, and all our Sacrifices must be offered unto God the same way: That is, we must ascend unto him by the same *Medium* through which he descends to us: or else no acceptance is to be look'd for. 1 *Pet.* 2. 5. How should guilty Rebels adventure into the Presence of the Holy, Righteous, Sin-hating God, but by him who hath made Atonement for our Sins? Take heed therefore that you leave not him out. Remember, it is upon Terms of *Grace* that we are received into Covenant with God, and of that Covenant Christ is the Mediatour; who therefore has taught us to distinguish between Faith in God, as God, and in himself, as Mediator. Joh. 14. 1. *Ye believe in God, believe also in me.* 'Tis well for us that we have him to stand between us and all Danger, lest the consuming Fire should break forth upon us, and our Blood be mingled with our Sacrifices.

Hence we find Repentance toward God, and Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ joined together, as the Sum and Substance of the Apostle's Preaching, *Acts* 20. 21. The former of these is the changing of the Mind, or the turning of the Soul [*μετανοια*] from Sin and Vanity to God, as our End: The latter is an applying of our selves to Jesus Christ, as the way to that End. That is, we must return unto God as our God, by a lively Faith in his Son as our Prince and Saviour, without whom neither Pardon nor Peace can be expected.

Not as if the Father was of himself averse to Mercy or Compassion, but only prevail'd upon, and as it were over-perswaded thereto by the Death-Merits and Intercession of his Son. Have a care of such Blasphemous Conceits as these, than which nothing is more directly contrary to the design of the Gospel. But still remember, it was not becoming the Majesty and Holiness of God, nor agreeable to the ends of Govern-

meet to receive such as we are into favour immedia
but through a Mediator, whom of his own free Love
hath provided for us. *John* 3. 16. *For God so lo*
the World, &c. So here *verse* 18. All things are of G
who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus. 'Tis a
Duty indeed, to admire the love of the Son: But O
not forget to admire also the Father's love.

III. And because it is the Office of the Holy S
to apply and communicate the Grace of Christ, the
fore it concerns us to *own*, *eye*, and *acknowledg*
accordingly in this whole business. As Jesus Chri
the *Way* to the Father: So the Holy-Ghost is the
ness of the Son, his Agent upon Earth, his Advo
with the Sons of Men, to plead his Cause, and to
pense his Grace. Who is therefore called by *Terti*
[*Christi, Agens & Vicarius*] and by a Learned M
our own, the Supreme Minister of Christ's K
dom.

Therefore tho' all the Persons [or Subsistenc
in the blessed Trinity do concur to the productio
the new Creature, yet this great work of Sanctifica
is by a certain peculiar eminency of Attribution
scribed to the Holy Spirit. 'Tis called the *Sanctifica*
of the Spirit, 2 *Thess.* 2. 13. 1 *Pet.* 1. 2. It is the S
rit that quickeneth, enlighteneth, and draweth
Souls to Christ, and to the Father by him. There
in all our Motions, and Tendencies God-ward, we m
look unto this Spirit for help; and act Faith upon h
for the Assistances and Influences of his Grace: If
attempt any thing of this nature in our own strengt
we shall certainly be baffled in our endeavours, a
make nothing of it. We ought to cry hard after
Spirit, and carefully to observe all his Accesses to
and the impressions of his Grace upon us; and al
to strike in with his Motions; to do most when
helps most: and thus our work will be like to succee
and prosper in our Hand.

Great care is to be taken how we carry it towar
him, that we may not *quench*, *resist*, *grieve*, or *vex* th
Spirit.

spirit, either by stifling Convictions, or running counter to the dictates of Conscience, or by foolish Delays, and Slothfulness. The help of the Spirit is to be expected in a diligent, humble, conscientious attendance upon him in his own way, *viz.* The use of his appointed Means. O remember that your *Duties*, *Graces*, and *Comforts*, will all be dead things, or nothing, if the Spirit of God be not the *Life* of them all. His grace must be thankfully acknowledged in all the strength we get, in all the progress we make, and we must still depend upon him for more: Yea, we ought to be more *distinct*, and *explicit*, in the workings of faith towards him, than commonly we are: We were baptized in the Name of the Holy-Ghost, as well as of the Father, and the Son: The three Persons are one God, equal in Power and Glory; in this Trinity none is before or after others; none is greater or less than another. Whence then cometh it to pass, that we are so defective in that part of the Life of Faith, which respecteth the third Person? This is a great dishonour to him, and an injury to our selves. But I must not stay to enlarge upon that here.

I only add. 'Tis the Office of the Spirit *to help our infirmities*: Rom. 8.26. *Through him we must mortify the deeds of the Body, that we may live.* Ver. 13. *By him the Love of God is shed abroad in the Hearts of Believers.* Rom. 5.5. He seals them to the day of Redemption. He witnesseth with their Spirits that they are the Children of God. Is the earnest of our Inheritance: But if any Man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

Thus I have shewed you the nature of this great work, 2. That *it is the turning of a Person to God in Christ, to learn to know, love, and live to him, and all this by the Grace and Help of the Holy Spirit.*

Thus, I say, we must be qualified and prepared for the Heavenly Glory.

CHAP. IV.

Of the several Steps whereby this blessed Work is begun, carried *on, and perfected in the Soul.*

HAving thus far opened the Nature of that Work, whereby we must be prepared for Heaven, if ever we come thither: I come now to consider more distinctly the order wherein 'tis carried on, how 'tis *begun*, *advanced*, and *perfected*.

And here I design not to trouble you with over-curious Enquiries about the way and manner of the Spirit's working on the Souls of Men, or how the efficacy of Grace is reconcilable with the natural liberty of the rational Creature: But shall content myself to wave Controversies, and insist upon some few plain necessary, acknowledged Truths, as being most suitable to the intent of this Discourse. And they are these that follow:

First. There are certain previous workings of a more common sort of Grace, whereby God is wont to prepare Men for *special* saving Grace.

'Tis his usual Method to bring his Works (whether of *Nature* or *Grace*) to their intended Perfection by degrees. He delights to glorify his *Power*, *Wisdom* and *Goodness*, by advancing things to an observable height and excellency from very small, or seemingly inconsiderable beginnings. Not to speak of the Creation of the World, or of the fashioning of a Child in the Womb, and the production of other Animals, and also Vegetables, *&c.* It is easy to take notice of the various Dispensations of the Law (as

venant) of Grace, and the gradual increase of Scripture-Light and Discoveries, till at length *the Sun of Righteousness himself appeared*, Heb. 1. 1, 2, 3.

But to come to the point: 'tis certain, the new Creature is wrought by degrees; and as God hath appointed a course of Means to be used, Duties to be performed in order to our Conversion, and Salvation: So he affords the help of his Grace in various Measures, as seems meet to his Infinite Wisdom.

Thus there are some *common* Operations of the Holy Spirit, which usually go along with the Gospel, and put Men into a *nearer* preparation, for *special* Grace than they were in before. Tho' God may sometimes, even in an instant, convert the most unprepared obdurate Persons; yet it is not his ordinary Method so to do, nor have any such Persons reason to expect to be thus dealt with.

As the Word is the Instrument by which God worketh upon Souls, so he first enables them in some measure to understand it, and then to believe it, and so by it he awakes them from their stupid Security; convinceth them of the Sinfulness, and Danger of an unregenerate State: Makes them solicitous about their eternal Welfare. *What shall I do to be saved?* How shall I escape the Damnation of Hell? Thus they are brought to see their need of Christ, as Men that are lost and undone without him: As also to perceive the necessity of Holiness in order to Happiness: Hereupon they make some Resolutions and fair Promises of amendment, and put forth some seemingly hopeful endeavours to become new Men: Insomuch that they are almost perswaded to be Christians indeed; and are not far from the Kingdom of God: Tho' they must be brought yet nearer, or else they are lost for ever.

Now tho' all this fall short of a through Change, yet it hath a *preparatory* tendency thereto. Somewhat of this kind *ordinarily* goes before the work of Conversion. Therefore such Impressions are not to be slighted, 'tis dangerous to smother Convictions, by suffer-

ing the noise, and hurry of the worldly Business, or sensual Delights, to divert our Thoughts from these things.

Secondly. Special saving Grace determines the Soul to a sincere and hearty closure with God in Christ. Here is the turning point; this it is to which the fore-mention'd preparations tend: And in which they must issue, and terminate to make us Christians indeed. 'Till this be done, the Person is in a carnal unregenerate State. We turn not unto God as God, if we turn not to him as the chief Good; and we turn not to him as the chief Good, so long as we prefer any other Object or Interest before him. I know indeed that the best of Men may sometimes have hankering Desires after their former Idols, and for this they lament, and mourn in secret: But still the *stated, predominant, habitual* bent of their Hearts is for God; and there is nothing which they more loath themselves for, than because they love God no more. *Hinc illæ lachrimæ.*——

Mark 12. 30. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind, and with all thy Strength.* How many Alls are here! "Yet (says one) if we had ten thousand times more "Powers and Principles, we ought to love God "with them all too. It is an emphatical Translation "of that Elegant Text of the Apostle Rom. 5. 5. *The "Love of God is shed abroad in our Hearts,* —— a co- "vering of the Soul, as the Waters cover the Sea. "—— O that God would fill up all my Capacities, "and make me yet more capacious! O that he would "take up all the room in me, and O that he would "make for himself more room in my Soul! Mr. "*Shaw's Meditations, pag.* 30, 31.

Can you imagin that you love God *at all* in a saving sense, if ye love him not *above all?* Why, this holy Love is the grand significant vital Motion of the Soul; 'tis the Root from whence all acceptable Service springs, and upon which it grows; or the Principle in-

to

to which it is resolved: 'Tis for want of this, that carnal Minds are not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be, *Rom.* 8. 7. Our Eye must be singly fix'd upon God, as our Supream End and chief Good; and so it will be full of Light; and our Hearts must be accordingly affected towards him. *A double Mind*, a Heart and a Heart, (as 'tis in the Hebrew, *Psal.* 12. 2.) *is hateful in the sight of God. A divided Heart is a faulty Heart*, Hos. 10. 2. Hence turning unto God with the *whole Heart*, is opposed to Treachery, Falshood, and an hypocritical shew of Conversion. *Jer.* 3. 10. *Her treacherous Sister* Judah *hath not turned unto me with her whole Heart, but feignedly, saith the Lord.*

As for the Interest of the great Mediatour in this matter, himself hath plainly shew'd us that *if we love Father, or Mother, Wife, or Children*, &c. *yea, or our own Lives, more than him, we are not worthy of him, cannot be his Disciples.* Mar. 10. 37. Luke 14. 26. Ye see here how he insists upon the prevailing degree of our love to him.

And indeed the serious contemplation of the love of God in Christ, is a most powerful Means to raise up our Souls to suitable returns of love to God again. *He that hath known the Son, hath also known the Father*, Joh. 14. 7.

Behold here, and admire the wonderful Wisdom that appears in the contrivance of our Redemption: Our Sin had brought us under the just Wrath and Displeasure of the Almighty: And also had corrupted our very Vitals, and turned our Hearts against God. And now let us see how aptly things were laid for the removal of both these, that so the Reconciliation might be mutual, and compleat. He to us, and we to him, 2 *Cor.* 5. 18, 19, 20.

God hath provided a ransom for us, to make way for his being reconciled to us, without any reflection upon himself, or his Government. To this end he hath sent his Son into the World, to reveal his Love, and Grace, and to do, and suffer so much for us.

And

And that we might be capable of a saving Interest in the benefits of this great Redemption, we are obliged to believe in the Redeemer, and by him in God, 2 *Cor.* 3. 4. 1 *Pet.* 1. 21. Now 'tis plain that such Faith tends in its own Nature, to produce holy Love to God, (who hath thus first loved us) and so to effect the Reconciliation on our part. Study this well, the substance of Christianity is contained in it.

"As Christ as Mediatour, is the summary means "and way to the Father, to bring Man home to his "Creatour: So Faith in Christ is a mediating Grace "to work in us the Love of God. As Mr. *Baxter* "it.

"No other Grace or Duty is accepted of God, "nor will prove our Salvation, any further than "participateth of predominant Love to God: But the "predominant Love is always an evidence of Life. *ibid.*

Thirdly. The same Power which hath brought the work thus far, doth maintain, and keep alive the Principle of Grace implanted in the Soul. Our *Spiritual* Life (no less than the *Natural*) depends upon the continual influx of its Almighty Author. *In him we live, and move, and have our Being*; not only as *Men*, but as *Christians*, or new Men. The Strength of that habitual Grace subjected *in* us, would never hold out, without daily Influences of efficient Grace still working *upon* us. Thus we *are kept by the Power of God, through Faith unto Salvation*, 1 Pet. 1. 5. And *preserved unto his Heavenly Kingdom*, 2 Tim. 4. 18.

We know what woful work our first Parents made, when their Concerns were left in their own Hands; how shamefully they betray'd their Trust, and ruined at once themselves, and their Posterity; and this through the meer mutability of their Nature, tho' upright, and innocent, as it came out of God's Hand. What then might be expected from us, who have not only mutable Natures, but great Remnants of Sin and Corruption, even in the very best of us. Surely if our

stock

ſtock of Grace were left only to our own management, we ſhould ſoon turn Bankrupts.

Let it be conſidered, that Grace is not a *natural*, but *ſupernatural* Principle; not *eſſential*, but an *additional* to our Beings; not born with us, but as it were a ſtranger, or new comer in us: And that our Hearts are not wholly diſpoſſeſſed of thoſe Objects which are againſt its work, nor delivered from thoſe Principles which have an enmity to it: Yea, that we often loſe ſome degrees of it, and therefore ſhould quickly loſe the reſt, if the divine Power were not engaged in our Preſervation, and that Faithfulneſs which *will not ſuffer us to be tempted above what we are able*, 1 Cor. 10.13. This holy Seed would ſoon come to nothing in ſo unkindly a Soil as our Hearts are, were it not cheriſh'd and watered by the ſame Hand that placed it there. This Spark of Divine Light would quickly be extinguiſh'd, if not kept in, and refreſhed, by continual Emanations from the Father of Lights.

'Tis true we are commanded to *keep our Hearts with all diligence*, [or above all keeping] *Prov.* 4. 23. To ſtand upon our guard, to be ſtedfaſt and unmoveable. That is, we muſt put forth our utmoſt Endeavours, (for God works by means) but if we *truſt to our Hearts, we are Fools*, Prov. 28. 26. I may allude to that Pſal. 127. 1. *Except the Lord keep the City, the Watch-man waketh but in vain.*

Well then, we muſt do our utmoſt *to keep that good thing that is committed to us*; but how? By the aſſiſtance of *the Holy-Ghoſt, which dwelleth in us.* 2 Tim. 1. 14. So Jude 21. *Keep your ſelves in the Love of God.* But then *verſ.* 24, 25. He teacheth them to look higher than their own Endeavours in this matter. *Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling*; —— *To the only wiſe God our Saviour, be Glory, and Majeſty, Dominion, and Power, both now, and ever. Amen.*

Fourthly. By the ſame Almighty Power, the new Creature is carried on *gradually* towards its deſigned Perfection. Phil. 1. 6. *Being confident of this very thing, that*

that

that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform [or finish] *it, until the Day of Jesus Christ.* The *Life* of Grace is not only kept whole in the Soul, but more abundant Life given it: According to the design of its merciful Saviour. Joh. 10. 10. *I am come that they might have Life, and that they might have it more abundantly.* That Heavenly *Light* which hath shined in upon it, increaseth *more and more unto a perfect Day.* Prov. 4. 18. The principle of holy *LOVE* is cherish'd, and blown up, till at length it come to a pure and perfect Flame.

That which hath been already wrought is good, so far as it goes; but the blessed Author of it will not leave his work imperfect; it shall be all *very good*, before he has done with it. As at the first Creation, *Gen.* 1. 31. God intends for his Children not only a Perfection of *parts*, but of *degrees:* And in so doing, he deals with them according to the manifest Tendency of that divine Nature, whereof he hath made them Partakers.

Can any thing be more agreeable, than for those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, to desire more full, and satisfying relishes of his Grace? And has he given them those Desires to abuse, and torment them? It cannot be. Surely those that *hunger and thirst after Righteousness, shall be filled.* Mat. 5. 6. Yea by how much the greater their Longings are, so much the fitter for large Communications. Psal. 81. 10. *Open thy Mouth wide, and I will fill it.* Ask great things, and with earnest Desires, and ye shall receive, that your Joy may be full.

This leaves a black Note upon those who are at a stand in Matters of Religion; make no progress, but seem well enough content with the measures to which they have attained. I tell you, such Persons have great reason to suspect their own Sincerity; nay, if this be their *stated, constant, habitual* Temper, they may justly be pronounced Hypocrites. He that thinks he hath Grace enough, has certainly no true saving

Grace

Grace at all. *Living Natures*, as Plants, Children, &c. thrive till they come to Perfection. Pieces of *Art*, or *dead* Things, as the Image of a Child, a withered Plant, are at a ſtand, or grow worſe. Phil. 3. 14. *I preſs toward the Mark. Sinceræ ſanctitatis inſeparabile ſignum eſt, deſiderium ſincerum perfectionis. Method. Theol. part 3. pag.* 216. A ſincere Deſire of Perfection, is an inſeperable Sign of ſincere Holineſs.

Is it to be thought that that Man has any ſaving Knowledg of God, or ſincere hearty Love to him, who doth not deſire to know him better, and to love him more? Ye that have experienc'd what theſe things mean, *conſider of* it, *take advice*, and *ſpeak your Minds*. But as for empty lifeleſs Hypocrites, I except againſt them, they are not competent Judges in the Caſe: Becauſe they ſavour not the things of the Spirit, but have their Judgments bribed, and over-ſwayed, by the Fleſhly Intereſt.

We are expreſsly commanded *to grow in Grace, to be always abounding in the work of the Lord.* And it muſt needs be of ill Signification, as to our State, if ſuch commands weigh nothing with us.

But with the truly Godly it is not ſo; the Grace which they have already received, inclines them to labour after more, tho' ſtill it is God that worketh in them. *Heb.* 13. 20, 21.

Fifthly, and Laſtly. The Souls of Believers are at their death made perfect in Holineſs. Somewhat hath been ſpoken of this already, which is now to be further illuſtrated and proved. The Scripture aſſures us, that the Souls of the Godly, being ſeparated from their Bodies, do paſs into Glory, or into the Preſence of Chriſt, *Abraham's Bolom.* Thus our Lord tells the Penitent Thief, Luk. 23. 43. *To Day ſhalt thou be with me in Paradiſe.* So the Apoſtle in this Context, *We are willing rather to be abſent from the Body, and to be preſent with the Lord.* verſ. 8. We are alſo told, that the Angels ſhall be our Convoys to bring us thither. *Luke* 16. 22. Now 'tis certain, that no unclean thing, nothing

that

that dieth can enter into the heavenly state. From whence it follows, that the Souls of the Faithful that dye must be perfectly freed from all sinful Weakneſſes; and therefore must needs be perfectly holy: For 'tis Nonſenſe to ſuppoſe a middle ſtate in this caſe, viz. in a rational Creature, obliged by the Law of its Nature, to a perfect conformity to the Will of its Creator. But what needs further reaſoning, when we are plainly told of the *Spirits of juſt Men made perfect?*

Thus 'tis evident, that when Death hath opened the Womb of Time, or drawn aſide the Vail, and let us into Eternity; all our ſinful Imperfections will be left behind us; and never trouble us more. How weak ſoever our preſent Infant-ſtate on Earth is; there is nothing above but perfect Holineſs, and Love. Thus the Day of Death is the Birth-day of the gracious Soul's Perfection. This is our third Birth (as one ſpeaks) and therefore no wonder if there be ſome Pangs, and Difficulties in it: As there was in the Birth of *Nature*, and in that of *Grace*, ſo in this of *Glory*. Should not the thoughts of this make Death welcome? It may be you will ſay, Death is an Enemy to Nature. But is it not a conquered Enemy? Has not our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, even in our Nature overcome it? Has he not taken away the *ſting* of it? And in ſo doing, gained us the *victory*. 1 *Cor.* 15. 55. *&c.* Yea, by the Power and Wiſdom of our mighty Redeemer, this Enemy, *Death*, is turned to our advantage; *To die is gain.* Is it terrible to Nature? What is Faith for, but to conquer ſuch Fears? Muſt we not die in Faith, as well as live by it?

But to return to the Point.

'Tis no wonder if ſuch ſinful imperfect Creatures as we, be much at a loſs in our apprehenſions concerning a State of Sin leſs Perfection, both as to the *nature* of it, and the *manner* how 'tis brought about. But for all this, it is not hard to conceive, that there are ſeveral things which may greatly contribute thereto. I will juſt name three Particulars,

1. Theſe

1. These Bodies will then be laid aside, and who knows not what heavy Weights, what Prisons, what Snares they have been to our Souls? Bodies of Sin, and Death, God knows, *Rom.* 7. 23, 24.

2. And therefore, those holy Habits which had the commanding Influence upon the Hearts and Lives of true Believers; but were miserably obscured, and kept as an under by the Mists and Darkness of the *animal* State, shall then display themselves, and appear in their own likeness: Which is not unintelligible, especially if the nature of an habit, consist in a *secret, deep, imperceptible* constant act of the Soul; and who can say it doth not so?

3. The admission of the Soul into the sight of the glorious God; this is much to be considered in this matter.

'Tis easy to enlarge upon all these, but to what purpose? *Tu ratiocinare, ego credam.* The Physician of our Souls knows how to perfect their Cure, in ways to us incomprehensible.

Thus we have considered the several Steps, whereby the work of Grace is begun, and carried on till it come to Perfection.

I would only add, that in this whole Business no violence is done to our natural Faculties: Grace presupposeth Nature, which it heals, and rectifies, but doth not destroy; tho' the workings of the Spirit in this matter be *powerful*, and *efficacious*, yet they are also *sweet* and *agreeable*. They will act most freely, when made free by Grace; 'tis so determin'd, that it also determines it self; that is, it moves *spontaneously* towards God, or, having received the influx of his Grace, *actively* concurs therewith, *viz.* Being first animated, and quickened thereby. And thus much for the explication of the Doctrine.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

Plain Proof from Scripture, and the nature of the thing, that none can come to Heaven, till they be wrought or prepared for it by Divine Grace.

THO' what has been already said, in order to the opening of the Doctrine, hath at the same time carried the Proof thereof along with it; so great Truth having so much Self-evidence in it, that one would think, being once understood, it could not but be assented to; yet because 'tis exceeding common for Men to bear up themselves with the hopes of Heaven, tho' they be utter Strangers to this great work of Grace; and withal, because it is very dangerous not to do: Therefore let me give you the Proof of what has been thus far explained, and set before you.

Men are slower of belief, as to this great *Article* of the Christian Doctrine, than to *most* (I might say *any*) other, as a Learned Man observes, [Mr. *How's Blessedness of the Righteous*, pag. 242.] But, *Let God be true, but every Man a Liar*, Rom. 3. 4. Therefore,

1. None are chosen to Salvation, but through Sanctification of the Spirit. God's eternal decree of Election connecteth the End and the Means, Holiness and Happiness, Grace and Glory, together. The Scripture is most full and plain in this case. Rom. 8. 29. *Whom he did foreknow, them he also did predestinate to be conformed to the Image of his Son.* And what follows? *Them he also called, justified, glorified.* Ephes. 1. 4. *According as he hath chosen us in him before*

Foundation of the World, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in LOVE, 2 Tim. 1. 9. *Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy Calling, not according to our works, but according to his own Purpose and Grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the World began.* See more 2 *Thess.* 2. 13. 1 *Pet.* 1. 2. Is it not plain from these Scriptures, that there is such a thing as Election of particular Persons to eternal Life; And that as God doth decree to give eternal Life upon certain conditions, so he doth also decree to give those conditions to certain Persons; And the execution of the Decree is ever answerable to the Decree it self? Ephes. 1. 11. *Being predestinated according to the purpose of him, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own Will.* Deny this, and you may deny any thing. Will you reverse the Decrees of Heaven, or deny them, because they suit not with your own carnal Temper? Or will you try to put asunder what God has join'd together? Or expect to be saved without being first sanctified? *The Counsel of the Lord that shall stand,* Prov. 19. 21. If ever ye come to to Heaven, ye must first be conformed to the holy Image of Jesus Christ, or sanctified by his Spirit.

Is not eternal Life the Gift of God, and has he not told us the way in which he hath determin'd to give it, and is it not downright madness to expect it our of God's way?

If therefore you be sollicitous concerning your everlasting Welfare, do not take the preposterous course of those Persons, who beginning at the wrong end first, amuse themselves about the eternal Decrees of God; remember *secret* things belong to him, *revealed* to you; therefore turn your Thoughts inward, examin whether you have been effectually called, so as to consent to the holy Covenant, and if so, ye may comfortably conclude concerning your Election. 2 *Pet.* 1. 10. 2 *Cor.* 13. 5.

But because there are some Persons, who affect to

cavil against this sort of Doctrine; I have thought meet to transcribe part of the 17th Article of the *Church of England. Valeat quantum valere potest.*

" Predestination to Life, is the everlasting purpose " of God, whereby (before the Foundations of the " World were laid) he hath constantly decreed by " his Counsel, secret to us, to deliver from Curse and " Damnation, those whom he hath chosen in Christ " out of Mankind, and to bring them by Christ to " Everlasting Salvation, as Vessels made to honour. " Wherefore, they which be endued with so excellent " a Benefit of God, be called according to God's pur- " pose by his Spirit, working in due Season: They " through Grace obey the Calling: They be justified " freely: They be made Sons of God by Adoption: " They be made like the Image of his only begotten " Son Jesus Christ: They walk religiously in good " Works, and at length by God's Mercy they attain " to Everlasting Felicity, *&c.*

To conclude; you must either acknowledg the Decree of Election, or say that all Men shall be saved, or that none shall be so. For nothing can be more evident than that God decrees whatsoever he effects.

2. Redeeming Love hath joined Sanctification and Salvation together. It was no part of our Blessed Saviour's design, to procure the admission of unholy Souls (while such) to Heaven: That would have been to have laid Heaven and Hell common. But he hath made way for the Communication of that Grace which must fit us for Glory, and then for our entrance thereinto. 1 John 3. 8. *He that committeth Sin, is of the Devil, for the Devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the Devil.* Matth. 1. 21. *He shall save his People from* (not in) *their Sins.* Tit. 2. 14. *Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar People, zealous of good works.* Ephes. 5. 25, 26. *Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify, and cleanse it.*

The Grace of the *Redeemer* was never intended to exempt us from the Obligation of Obedience to our *Creator*, but to bring us back thereto.

The *promissory* part of the Law of Innocency, is indeed ceased by reason of our Incapacity. A guilty Creature can lay no claim to Life and Happiness, by virtue of a Covenant which required perfect and perpetual Obedience as the Condition thereof. But then the *preceptive* part of that Law is still so far in force, that the least violation of the Divine Law is Sin: And the least Sin makes perpetual Punishment our due; except pardoning Mercy interpose for our deliverance.

And here it is that the Grace of the Redeemer takes place: Tho' perfect Obedience be still commanded us; yet it is not insisted upon as a *condition*, whereupon our Eternal Happiness is *suspended*.

Sincerity shall be accepted through the Merits and Mediation of Jesus Christ, who hath in his own Person fulfilled all Righteousness, and withal offered up himself a Sacrifice, to satisfy Divine Justice for our Disobedience. Pray be clear in these things.

Do not expect that Christ will save you, unless you lay down your Arms, and submit to the Divine Soveraignty. How can there be Peace between God and your Souls, so long as ye resolve to persist in your Rebellion? Is Christ the Minister of Sin? Or shall we *continue in Sin that Grace may abound? God forbid.* Jesus Christ is exalted by the Father to be a Prince and a Saviour: To give first Repentance, and then Forgiveness: To turn Men's Hearts from Sin, and then to pardon it.

If ye expect to be saved any other way than through the Merits and Satisfaction of Christ, say so; and then we shall know that ye are Infidels: But if not; then know ye that Sanctification is an *essential part* of that Salvation which Christ hath designed for his People.

3. It is a manifest affront to the holy Spirit of God,

to imagine that Men can be saved without [illegible] wrought for it by his renewing Grace. 'Tis in effect *nullify* or *deny* the Office of the Holy-Ghost; as if [illegible] gracious Operations upon the Souls of Men were [illegible] *less*, or *superfluous* things. Or at least that Men [illegible] attain to Happiness without them. Is this to belie [illegible] in the Holy-Ghost, or is it not rather to blaspheme him? Do ye not tremble to approach so near to the [illegible] *pardonable* Sin?

If Men may be saved without being sanctified, [illegible] what purpose are all the Influences of the Spirit [illegible] God upon his People? If Holiness be so needless a thing, that a Man may come to Heaven well enough without it, why doth the Spirit strive so long with poor Creatures to make them holy? Why doth he still follow them with the earnest Solicitations of his Grace (notwithstanding their unkind Resistance) from one Ordinance and Providence to another? How great a work is it to *quicken*, *illuminate*, and draw to God, a *dead*, *blind*, *disaffected* Soul! and to uphold and carry on the work, as has been already opened. What mighty Power doth the Spirit put forth in this! and dare ye say 'tis more than needs? Or prove to your selves Salvation without it? This would be not only to tread under Foot the Son of God, (as I have heard under the former head) but to do despite unto the *Spirit of Grace*.

I wonder not that such Men make a scoff at the Spiritual Worship of God: the Lord convert, and pardon them for they know not *what they say, nor whereof they affirm*, 1 Tim. 1. 7. *But measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves amongst themselves, are not wise*, or [understand it not] 2 *Cor.* 10. 12.

Surely in God's account none are look'd upon as true Worshippers, but they who worship the Father in Spirit and in *Truth*; *for the Father seeketh such to worship him*. Joh. 4. 23. But that brings me to,

4. The Institution of the Gospel-Ministry and Ordinances, is a further Proof of this great Truth. [illegible]

works by his appointed Means; *Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.* The Gospel is called *the Ministration of the Spirit*, 2 Cor. 3. 8. As also *the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus*, Rom. 8. 2. And well may it be so called by way of *eminency*, because greater measures of Grace are given under the Gospel-Dispensation, than were usual before.

Now, the sacred Office of the Ministry is instituted in subserviency to the Influences and Operations of the holy Spirit. 'Tis he that qualifies Ministers for their work, assists them in it, and makes it successful to the attainment of it's end. Moreover, the Sum and Substance of that Errand, upon which we are sent, ye have in the latter end of this Chapter. *Vers.* 18, 19, 20. Namely to tell you, *that God was in Christ, reconciling the World unto himself, ——— hath committed unto us the word of Reconciliation. Now then we are Ambassadours for Christ, as tho' God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.*

Our business therefore is to treat with Sinners in the Name of God, and the Redeemer: That we may perswade them to comply with the offers of Free Grace. And to edify, strengthen, and help the Joys of those who have heartily complied. *Ephes.* 4. 11, 12, 13.

And O how strict a charge is laid upon us! That we *be instant in Season, and out of Season*; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all Long-suffering and Doctrine. *For the time will come when, &c.* (we may *now* say 'tis already come) 2 *Tim.* 4. 2, 3, 4. And that we *watch for your Souls, as they that must give an account*, Heb. 13. 17. and warn you of your danger, *that your Blood may not be required at our Hand.* Ezek. 3. 18. *And who is sufficient for these things?* 2 Cor. 2. 16.

Well then; if Men may be saved without being wrought for it, *&c.* of what use is the ministerial Office? Or why are we so strictly charged?

Moreover, the whole Course of Religious Duty that is appointed us, with that Seriousness and Spirituality

liey therein required, doth fully prove the Point we have in hand: The holy reverent Worship of God in his Ordinances, doth powerfully tend to raise our Souls nearer to him, and to make them more like him; to heal our spiritual Distempers, and to refine and purify all our Faculties and Powers, and so to prepare and fit us for the State of Heavenly Perfection. Therefore we must not look upon such appointments, as if they were only *meer arbitrary* Injunctions, to exact homage from us: But (tho' Soveraign Authority is to be acknowledged in them) we must also consider how infinite Wisdom and Goodness has suted our *Work* to our *End*, our *present* Duty to our *future* Happiness; that by the one we might be prepared for the other. From whence 'tis evident, that Holiness is necessary to the Work and Business of our present Life, as also to our future Blessedness. We can neither serve nor enjoy God here or hereafter, without being wrought thereto by his Grace. I mention not the heartless Service of Hypocrites, as not being worth taking notice of. Hence also ye may learn what ends to propose to your selves in every part of Divine Worship. But I proceed,

5. None but those who are thus wrought upon, have any right to the Heavenly Felicity according to the Tenour of the Gospel-Covenant. Unregenerate Persons, as such, are peremptorily excluded, even by the Law of Grace it self. Ye cannot produce the least Syllable in Scripture, whereupon to ground those hopes of Heaven, wherewith such Men are wont to flatter themselves. But I can shew you enough to confound, and overthrow their wicked Presumptions for ever. The Sentence of their Condemnation is legible in almost every Leaf of the Bible; yet will they not consider it, nor lay it to Heart. *He that believeth not, is condemned already; he shall not see Life, but the Wrath of God abideth on him. Except a Man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.* Joh. 3. 3, 18, 36. *If ye live after the Flesh, ye shall die*; without HOLINESS no

so Men shall see the Lord. Those are the true and faithful Sayings of God. All this was settled long before thou were born; if thou hast any exceptions against it, thou comest too late with them, (as one says.)

Assure your selves that these sacred Constitutions cannot be disannulled: Your Unbelief shall not make the Truth of God of none effect; ye will quickly find whose word shall stand, *his* or *yours*.

'Tis true indeed, Pardon and Life are freely offered by the Gospel-grant, if thou wilt repent and turn to God through Christ. Otherwise it brings upon thee an heavier Condemnation, than thou were under before, *John* 3. 19. a *surer Punishment*, *Heb.* 10. 29.

The case speaks it self: Thou canst plead no Interest in the saving Benefits of the Covenant of Grace, unless thou come up to the Terms thereof: Abused Mercy turns to greater Indignation. Therefore it much concerns you to inquire what those Terms are, and not to venture your Souls upon Uncertainties. *Behold, the Judg standeth before the Door*, Jam. 5. 9. *What is the Chaff to the Wheat, saith the Lord?* Jer. 23. 28. Mat. 3. 12.

6. None but those who are thus wrought upon, have the *earnest* and *first Principles* of the Heavenly Felicity: How then should they have the thing it self?

Do ye expect the Fruit without the Seed? the Perfection of Holiness and Happiness without the Beginnings thereof? the Inheritance without the Earnest? How can these things be? How absurd are such Hopes as these? Would ye be perfect Men in Christ, without first going through the Infant-State of Christianity? That is, being converted and becoming as little Children?

As for the truly Godly, they have Eternal Life abiding in them; even that saving, transforming, practical Knowledg of God and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent, which is the Inchoation thereof: But the Ungodly are not so, being dead in Trespasses and Sins:

To be carnally minded is Death: They sow to the Flesh, what then can they expect (*reasonably*) to reap but Corruption? Would ye sow one sort of Grain, and reap another?

Know therefore, that the holy Spirit of God working in the Souls of Believers, suitable Inclinations Heaven-ward, and Desires after it, (that is, rational, judicious, holy Desires) doth thereby give them an earnest of it; but still remember, *If any Man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*, Rom. 8, 9.

7. The Guilt of Sin, which all unregenerate Persons are under, stands between them and Heaven. I hope ye know that ye are Sinners, and that ye must be justified before you can be glorified. The weight of Guilt must needs press you down into everlasting Darkness, if it be not taken off by pardoning Mercy and Grace. And do ye not also know that there is no Pardon without true Repentance? And withal that true Repentance is nothing less than the turning of the Soul from Sin to God, a change of the Temper, and Disposition of the Heart; the very work whereof we have all this while been speaking. *Repentance toward God.*

Hence the Gospel was ushered in with the preaching of Repentance, *Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.* That so all Men might know upon what terms they were like to enjoy the blessed Priveledges of this glorious Gospel Constitution.

And here I must tell you, it is not enough to say that you are sorry for your past Sins, now the Pleasure of them is over, and Conscience (it may be) uneasy about them. No, no; the bent of your Hearts must either be turned against Sin, to hate, abhor it, and mourn for it, as 'tis displeasing and hateful in the sight of God, *&c.* or else *Iniquity will be your ruin.*

Moreover, the Sincerity of your Repentance, or of this change of Heart, from the Love of Sin, to the Love of God and Holiness, must appear, *by bringing forth Fruits meet for Repentance.*

8. All

8. All that ever have entred into that blessed State, were *first* prepared for it, and effectually wrought upon by Divine Grace.

The case of Infants need not stop us, such as have been *saved* from the Womb, have also been *sanctified* from thence.

But 'tis the case of the Adult, or grown Persons, which falls more *directly* under our Consideration. Search the Scriptures, and you may find there how those Persons are characteriz'd and described who are gone to Heaven before us. 'Tis true they all had their failings, which they groaned under, and longed to be delivered from: But as to the main, they were Men that walked with God: Ordered their Conversations, as seeing him that is invisible: Men that lived *humble, mortified, self-denying* Lives, chusing rather to suffer Affliction with the People of God, than to enjoy the Pleasures of Sin for a season: That mourned for the Abominations of the Times and Places wherein they lived; whose righteous Souls were vexed with the filthy Conversation of the Wicked; in a word, Men that confessed themselves Strangers and Pilgrims on the Earth; sought an Heavenly Country, and waited for the Salvation of the Lord. See *Heb.* 11.

Thus ye have heard how the Saints *now* in Glory got thither; and will ye dream of coming to Heaven any other way? They were all wrought for that blessed State, and so must ye; or else fall short of it, and perish.

As it is matter of great Encouragement and Comfort to the Godly, to think how many Thousands are got to Heaven, the same way by which they themselves (*through Grace*) are going: So one would think it should damp the hopes of graceless Hypocrites, to find themselves in a quite *different*, yea *contrary* way.

9. The Scripture assures us, that the *Righteous themselves are scarcely saved*, 1 Pet. 4.18. *μολις σωζεται*; i. e. tho they are *certainly* saved, yet not without a great

great deal of *difficulty*. The same word ye have *Acts* 14. 18. Saved they are, but not without much striving, by reason of *the straitness of the Gate, and the narrowness of the Way which leads to Life*; many Enemies to conflict with; many Temptations, Doubts and Fears, to overcome; many Storms and Tempests to get through, before they come safe to the Haven. What say ye to all this? Do these things offend ye? They are true for all that.

And now consider what the Apostle infers from all in the words *immediately* following: *Where shall the Ungodly, and the Sinner appear?* What shall become of them? Why the Psalmist gives you an answer to this, Psal. 1. 4, 5. *They are like the Chaff which the Wind driveth away: therefore the Ungodly shall not stand in the Judgment, nor Sinners in the Congregation of the Righteous; they shall be driven away in their own wickedness.*

Well Sirs, Do ye think much to be told of the Difficulties that lie in the way to Heaven? Are ye for a *cheap, formal, customary, easy* way of Religion? Do ye think that the greatest Earnestness, Care and Seriousness, which we can possibly use to secure our Eternal Interest, is making more adoe than needs? Look ye to it, go on and prosper; but remember, that the *Righteous themselves are scarcely saved.*

10. Lastly, 'Tis impossible, in the very nature of the thing, that an unholy Soul should enjoy the Heavenly Felicity. This is evident, if ye will but compare the Temper and Spirit of unregenerate Persons with the Account that has been given concerning the State of future Glory. The nature of Things must be quite overthrown, and the grossest Contradictions reconciled, before an unrenewed Person, as such, can be happy.

I know that all Men have some general *indistinct* Tendencies (even by Nature) towards Happiness. But as for those upon whom this great Change has not past, they neither *know*, nor truly *desire* that which alone

...can make them blessed. They are most miserably confounded in their own Wishes, and cannot tell what they would be at. They say indeed that they desire, and hope for Heaven; but in the mean time they know not what they talk of. Were it possible they should be admitted thither; why, so long as their corrupt depraved temper of Spirit remaineth upon them, they would be quite out of their Element, and unhappy even in Heaven it self.

The reason is plain; there must be a suitableness between the Faculties and the Objects, or else what Fruition, what Pleasure can there be? Would the most pompous magnificient Shews signify any thing to a blind Man, or a Consort of the most Harmonious Musick to the Deaf? Why, just so it is here: The Hearts of the Sons of Men, till sanctified by Divine Grace, are utterly unfit for the *Society*, the *Work*, the *Enjoyments* of Heaven.

As for the *Society*, 'tis holy, there's a Communion of Saints in Perfection: But the Hearts of carnal Men are impure, and unholy: There are none like them to converse with in Heaven.

Those above are *employ'd* in admiring, loving, praising, and glorifying the blessed God: And 'tis the enjoyment of him that makes them happy in that State. But certain it is, that the Souls of Ungodly Men are deeply averse from God, and at Enmity against him; how then should they be blessed in the enjoyment of one whom they never loved, when to enjoy him is to love and delight in him? O Sirs, ye must either be made holy, that is, conformed unto God, in the frame and disposition of your Spirits, or else Heaven cannot be Heaven to you.

Therefore I beseech you deal truly with your selves in this Matter, let me put it to your Consciences; nay, do ye put it to them your selves, and then tell me, How do ye relish that sort of Life on Earth, which is most like to the Heavenly Life? How are ye affected to those things which have a nearer Tendency

to lead you God-ward? If his holy Day the Joy of your Hearts? Are ye delighted in his Worship? ye ſtrive in every Duty to get as near to him, through Chriſt, as you can? What Pleaſure do ye take in diſcourſing concerning the things of God? In ſpeaking of the Glory of His Majeſty, and the Wonders of his Grace, the Holineſs and Perfection of his Law, &c. What ſay ye? Do ſuch things as theſe are agreeable with you? Or are they not a wearineſs to you? Are ye not ready to think that *Lords-Days* return too often? And that ſtrict and ſerious Religion is intolerable Preciſeneſs? Do not your Hearts riſe againſt it? Are ye not glad when the Service of God is over? Tho ſome thing ye would do to ſecure Heaven for a reſerve, when ye can enjoy the World no longer? Is not this the very Temper of your Spirits? And is it not very deplorable? Alas! what ſhould ye do in Heaven with ſuch Hearts as theſe? Would ye not be eternally weary of an Eternal Sabbath? Would not your ungracious Spirits be ever recoiling and uneaſy? Do ye not yet ſee that there is no coming to the new *Jeruſalem* without new Hearts? If not, 'tis becauſe ye ſhut your Eyes.

Certainly if unregenerate Men might have an Heaven of their own chooſing, it would be vaſtly different (even quite another thing) from that which God hath prepared for them that LOVE him. But how ſhould Men be happy againſt their own Wills? Or in a State to which the Temper of their Spirits is not ſuited? So true is that great Saying of a Worthy Divine, "When God hath ſo determined, *that without Holineſs none ſhall ſee him*; he lays no other Law upon unholy Souls, than what their own impure Natures lay upon themſelves. [*Bleſſedneſs of the Righteous*, *pag.* 46.]

By this time ye ſee, or may ſee if ye will, that except the Decrees of God can be reverſed, the Deſign of Redemption perverted, the Office of the Holy Spirit nullified, the Inſtitution of the Miniſtry and Ordinances run down, the Threatnings of the Gospel

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CHAP. VI.

Several Inferences of Truth drawn from the foregoing Diſcourſe.

THus we have fully proved, that except ye will be *holy*, ye cannot be *happy*: If this therefore be ſo *clear* and *certain* a Truth, it muſt needs be alſo a very *weighty* and *important* one: a thing much to be conſidered, and cloſely applied; becauſe our Spiritual and Eternal Welfare, and (what is infinitely more than either) the Glory of the Great God is *ſo* nearly concerned in it.

Now ſince there are many other Truths, which have an intimate connexion with, and dependance *upon* this great Doctrine; let us begin with the Conſideration of theſe, for the informing of our Judgments.

Inſer. 1. We may learn from hence the great Worth and Excellency of real Holineſs. Real (I ſay) in oppoſition to that *vain, empty ſhew* of Religion, wherewith Multitudes make a ſhift to deceive themſelves; even becauſe they know no better, and that becauſe they will not know. Satan hath taken advantage

tage by their own Corruption to blind their Minds, and close their Eyes; and thus, *they chuse Darkness rather than Light, because their Deeds are Evil.* Hence it is that they *see no Beauty in Holiness*; no more than they do *the Form and Comliness of the great Pattern and Procurer of it.* Isa. 53. 2.

They do not *approve things that are excellent.* If they meddle with Matters of Religion, they do but debase them: First by forming low and unworthy Notions of them, suitable to their own degenerate Tempers and Spirits; then they act accordingly; and after all highly value themselves upon what they have done.

Nevertheless the high Excellency of Holiness, manifestly appears from the *three* following Particulars, which may easily be drawn from what has been already delivered.

1. Its Original. 'Tis from Heaven, the blessed God is himself the Author of it, as in the Text. *He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God.* 'Tis a Divine Work, and that not a *common* Work neither, but wrought in a way of *special Grace*; and therefore it has a *peculiar* Excellency in it. Insomuch that the Subjects of this great Change are denominated, *born of God*, Joh. 1. 13. *born from above*, chap. 3. 3. as the word [ἄνωθεν] may be rendred. Hereupon they are advanced to the Name and Relation of Children: 1 Joh. 3. 1. *Behold what manner of Love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the Sons of God.* So called, and not miscalled, for so they *are*, as vers. 2. *Now are we the Sons of God.*

2. The Nature of true Holiness speaks the Excellency of it. 'Tis the Soul's Conformity to the blessed God; his Image drawn upon it, a Participation of the Divine Nature: which sweetly and effectually inclines all the Faculties and Powers of our Souls God-ward; and so far as it prevails upon us, it takes away our unkind Aversion and Estrangedness from him, and teacheth us to center upon him, as our Portion, Happiness and chief *Good*. In short it is our devotedness unto God,

God, which implies a Separation from whatsoever stands in opposition against him, as such.

So that had the Apostle been silent as to the Author of this great Work, the very Nature of it might have told us whence it is, for it bears the Image and Superscription of God upon it.

Little do the proud Despisers of Holiness consider what they say, or *against whom it is that they speak, and make a wide Mouth, and draw out the Tongue,* Isa. 57 4. To vilify this work is a dishonour to the Author. To cast Dirt upon the *Image*, is an affront to its great *Original*, *who scorneth their Scorners, sits in the Heavens, and laughs at them, for he seeth that their Day is coming*, Psal. 37 13.

3. The blessed End and Issue of Holiness shews you the worth of it; it comes from above, and thither it leads; and is at last compleated in the Heavenly Perfection. Judg then of the Way and Means by the End; here is the Faith and Patience of the Saints. They are high-born, and a suitable Inheritance is designed them. To think or speak slightly of Holiness, is to contemn Heaven it self; which is a State of Perfection therein.

Wo unto them that draw Iniquity with Cords of Vanity, and Sin as it were with a Cart-Rope. That put Darkness for Light, and Light for Darkness. Isa 5. 18, 20. It may be at last they'll say (as one of their Predecessors did) *let me die the Death of the Righteous:* Not from any love to Righteousness, but from a slavish Fear of the just Punishment of their Impiety; and therefore those *forced* Cries will avail them nothing.

Inser. 2. Learn from hence the Reasonableness and Equity, yea, the wonderful Grace and Benignity of the Divine Government over fall'n Man! See what a Connexion there is between our *Duty* and *Interest*. All the *Precepts* which God hath given us, may justly be esteemed as so many *Directions* which have a *natural* Tendency to our own Welfare. 'Tis true they have

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the nature of *Laws*, being enforced by the Divine Command. But is that any injury to us, that the most blessed glorious God has, by his Soveraign Right and Authority over us, obliged us to be happy? Put us under such a Law, that we cannot be *innocently* miserable; if we perish it shall be our own fault that we do so. Well may it be called a *Paternal* Government, God is pleased to deal with us in a way suitable to that Tie which he has condescended to take unto himself, viz. *The Father of Spirits*. Behold how tenderly and graciously he deals with his Off-spring; even the rational Soul that issued from him. His Love invites them; his Authority enjoys them to be happy; he reasons the Case with them, *why will ye die?* Yea, he beseeches them in the most earnest moving manner, *as though God did beseech you by us*, 2 Cor 5. 20. They are invited from time to time, *in his Name*, to lay aside their Frowardness and Enmity against *him*, who alone can make them compleatly blessed: And thus *he waits to be gracious* to them. How little do we deserve to be thus treated; methinks this should make us even more ashamed and blush, to consider our unworthy and disingenuous Carriage towards him; and convince us at length, how much better it is to be under his Government, than to be left to our own Conduct.

His *Commandments are not grievous*; The *first* and *principal* of them is this, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine Heart, &c.* What but the desperate Wickedness of our depraved sinful Natures can make this seem an hard Saying? Whom should we love, but him who is infinitely Good in himself, and the most suitable Good for us? The Author of all the Blessings that we ever enjoyed; upon whom both our *Being*, and *Well-being*, do entirely depend: Yet he doth not put us off with Trifles, but offers himself to be the Object of our Love: And promiseth all the Returns of Kindness and Benignity, which can reasonally be desired to make us happy: And can ye then refuse to love? O what is the cause of your so much

an Averſion from him? *What Iniquity have ye ever found in him?* Jer. 2. 5. Lord, into how great Confuſion and Diſtraction are we fallen, by forſaking him, and following into our own wretched ſelves! Alas, that our Hearts ſhould be ſo averſe from cloſing with the *infinite, univerſal, all-comprehending* Good! He hath made our Capacities ſuch as none but himſelf can fill and ſatisfie: Therefore we muſt needs be *unhappy* or *reſtleſs*, while we keep at a diſtance from him. Surely then no Precepts can tend more *directly* to our own Felicity, than this of *loving God with all our Hearts*: And to this all the reſt are reduced; *for he is the fulfilling of the Law*: and ſurely the Obedience of Love will be pleaſant; if thy Mind be once brought up to this *holy Love* the work is done; thy Cavils againſt any other Commands will then be at an end. Thou wilt ever juſtify the Divine Law, and humble thy ſelf, that in ſo many things thou falleſt ſhort. Thou wilt then ſee reaſon to convince thee, that even thoſe things which thou waſt wont to look upon as over great *Severities* in Religion, were nothing but what the nature of thy Caſe made neceſſary in order to thy Cure. That no needleſs Reſtraints are laid upon thee: that the moſt exact Watchfulneſs, the greateſt Mortification and Self-denial, are all little enough to keep to froward a Nature within its due Bounds. In a word, thou wilt ſee, that God hath reſtrained thee from nothing which was truly good for thee, but only denied thee the liberty of *Self-undoing*; and therefore that his ways are *equal*, how *unequal* ſoever thine own ways have been.

Inſtr. 3. Learn from hence what woful work Sin hath made in human Nature; forasmuch as ſo great a Power of Divine Grace is neceſſary to *refit* and *qualify* for its proper Uſe and End. All our *Faculties* and *Powers* are exceedingly depraved and enfeebled by the Fall. *In us* (that is, in our Fleſh) *there dwells no good thing. When we would do good, evil is preſent with us.* Rom. 7. 18, 21. *They that are in the Fleſh* (that is, all

unregenerate Persons) cannot please God. Chap. 8. 8.

Some indeed there are, who deny Original Sin, and would perswade us that 'tis only by imitation that we become wicked: But the Scripture is full and clear in the Case. Psal. 51. 5. *Behold, I was shapen in Iniquity, and in Sin did my Mother conceive me.* Even the best of Men were *by nature Children of Wrath, as well as others.* Ephes. 2. 3. Hence our Saviour shews us the necessity of Regeneration, Joh. 3. 5. 6. —— *That which is born of the Flesh is Flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit.* Vers. 7. *Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again.* Is not Death the wages of Sin? Do not Infants die, even before they are capable of actual Sin? therefore they have *original* Sin. And why are they washed with Water in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy-Ghost, if they have no sinful Defilement upon them? and whence is it that Corruption doth so early discover it self *in* them, but because they brought it into the World *with* them?

True it is that our first Parents were created in a holy and happy State, endued with the Knowledg and Love of God, fitted for Communion with him, and perfect Obedience to him, *&c.* This Man once was, sad to say *was*, and is not. *Our Gold is become Drift, the Crown is fallen from our Head. Wo unto us, for we have sinned. How are the Mighty fallen!*

The Distempers of our Souls are now past numbering: The Understanding and Will, which were made to govern the inferiour Faculties, (the one by guidance, the other by command) are themselves enslaved to Lust and Appetite. *So that Man is born like a wild Ass's Colt; Folly and Vanity is bound up in his Heart from his very Child-hood.*

Being departed from God (the Center in which all our Faculties should unite, and for whom they ought to be improved and employ'd) we are become at variance with one another, and each Man with himself. Not to mention the bitter Strifes and Envyings, the bloody Wars and Contentions, whereby Nations

and Kingdoms, yea and lesser Societies too, rise up against another, it may not be amiss to consider how strangely inconsistent even with themselves usually Men are: One would think they were made up of Contradictions, and Absurdities. The sensitive part is against the rational: The Will against the Judgment, their Practice gives the Lie to their Profession: They say and do not, or they say one thing, and do the quite contrary. They are like *the troubled Sea, when it cannot rest, whose Waters cast up Mire and Dirt*, Isa. 57. 20. *The Body which was made to be a Servant, is become their Ruler; and this is one of those things which the Earth can bear*, Prov. 30. 21, 22. A thing greatly to be lamented. *Lam.* 5. 8. From hence it is that these Commotions and Disorders do proceed: Professing to be *Wise*, they are become *Fools*, and that more *spiritually* as to those things wherein they are most concerned to have their Wits about them. *Wise to do Evil, but to do Good they have no Knowledge*, Tit. 1. 16. *They profess that they know God, but in Works they deny him, being abominable, disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate. With their Mouths they shew much Love, but their Hearts go out after their Idols.* They would be happy, but cannot endure the thoughts of that which alone can make them so. They enquire the way to *Zion*, but set their Faces quite contrary. They pretend to believe the Evil and Danger of Sin, but will not be perswaded to leave it. They oft complain of the Vanity of this World, and of the Crosses and Disappointments they meet with in it; but will not be prevailed with to set their Hearts upon a *better*. Yea, many of them are fondest of these present Enjoyments, when they grow old, and cannot but know that they must quickly leave them. Yea some of them hate and revile others for living in some measure up to the Rules of that Religion which they themselves profess. The time would fail me to mention the thousandth part of that Nonsense whereof they are continually guilty. So bewitched a thing is a carnal Heart! As if their Lusts had

not only bereaved them of all due Sense of Religion, but of their *Wits* too both together.

Thus the Case stands with unregenerate Persons, till the Grace of God rectify these disorders, and bring their Souls into a better Frame: And O how great a work is this! See what the Apostle speaks of it, Ephes. 1. 19. *And what is the exceeding* [το ὑπερβαλλον, transcendant, Hyperbolical] *greatness of his Power to us-ward who believe according to the working* [Energy] *of his Mighty Power.* [τὸ κράτος τῆς ἰσχύος] *the Might of his Power*, &c.

Therefore, Sirs, *lay the Ax to the Root of the Tree*, consider *thoroughly*, and bewail *deeply* your *original* Corruption. Pray hard for renewing Grace, it will signify little for you to empty some of the Streams, while the Fountain is disregarded, which will fill up all again. Corruption lies deep in you, and will take a great deal of pains to master it, and root it out; nor can ye expect that God will do it, without the concurrence of your own Endeavours with, and under his Grace. *Phil.* 2. 12, 13.

Inser. 4. Learn also from hence the *Weakness*, *Wickedness*, or both, of those Persons who go about to deny or obscure the Doctrine of *special Grace*. Their *Weakness*, I say, in disowning a thing so manifest both by Scripture, and Experience. Their *Wickedness* in arraigning to rob God of the Glory which is due to him on this account. They cry up the *natural* Freedom of Man's Will, but consider not *its moral* Impotency or Indisposition to that which is Good; it's cursed Aversion from God and Holiness, which will never be overcome but by the Power of Free Grace. I know indeed that if Men were truly willing, then the work were done, and therefore the Obstinacy of their Wills makes them inexcusable. John 5. 40. *Ye will not come to me that ye might have Life.* But I also know, *that if ever they be made willing, it must be in the Day of God's Power.* Psal. 110. 3. *No Man can come to*

me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him. That is, their Wills are so corrupt, that they cannot find in their Hearts to renounce their Lusts, and give up themselves to the obedience of the Gospel. *They affect a distance from God*, care not for coming near him: They are *dead in Trespasses and Sins.*

Tho still they have *natural* Faculties, intellective and elective Powers, (else we might as well preach to Walls as Men) yet when all's done, 'tis Grace that must sanctify and heal these Faculties, and determine them *God-ward*, or else they are lost for ever. That some are thus wrought upon is plain Matter of Fact, ye need go no further then the Text for Proof thereof. And 'tis as plain that others are left under the Power of their own willful Enmity, and Alienation from God. In short, that *any* are sanctified and saved is to be ascribed to *special Grace*, that the *rest* perish is their *own doing*, not strictly and properly because they *could not*; but because they *would not* do otherwise. The Destruction which falls upon them is of their own chusing in that they will not be perswaded to forsake the way that leads to it. Prov. 8. 36. *He that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own Soul: All they that hate me, love Death.*

The Law of Grace is establish'd, *ordered in all things, and sure.* The Terms of Salvation are unalterably settled, and God will judg Men accordingly, without respect of Persons; and so shall the Sentence of Judgment be executed too.

Moreover, God gives unto all Men such degrees of Grace and Help, as is meet for him to give; and more by far than they duly improve. And if they would rightly use what they have (so far as they are able) they have great encouragement to expect more; therefore his proceedings with them, for their willful Neglects, are beyond all just exception.

Again, if over and above all this, he give to some Persons (as 'tis certain he doth) yet *greater* Proportions of Grace, even so much as shall effectually work upon

them, and so them for Heaven, who can say unto him what doest thou? May he not do what he will with his own? Is there any Injustice in all this?

What say ye? Are not some Persons saved? Are they not saved by Grace? Is not this Grace the Gift of God? Doth God give it in *time*, and did he not decree to give it from *Eternity*? Where then are your Cavils against Election and special Grace? Surely you will not deny but that Multitudes perish by their own wilful final Impenitency, *through the Righteous Judgment of God, because they hated him, and would not that he should reign over them.*

Infer. 5. Lastly, Ye may learn from hence how exceeding dangerous it is to resist and quench the Spirit of Grace.

Ye have heard it fully proved, that there is a great work which must be *done* upon your Souls, or ye are *undone* for ever: And dare ye neglect the offered Help of the Spirit? Do ye not yet know that by a *common* sort of Grace, he usually prepares Men for *special* Grace? And can ye expect the *latter*, while ye despise or improve not the *former*? Do ye not consider that such neglects are like to leave you under greater Guilt and Hardness than ye were before? Why then do ye delay to strike in, and comply with the inward Motions of the Spirit? Why do ye not pray earnestly for more of his help? Do ye not sometimes feel some awakening Convictions, some Desires, some Purposes which have a tendency toward your Conversion? Whence are these but from the blessed Spirit of God? And when he calls, will ye behave your selves as if ye heard not, or were not at leisure to regard him? How will ye be able to answer this at last? How comes it to pass, that ye put off things of this nature with some *slight* and *short* endeavours, and then return to your wonted Coldness and Formality, or Indifferency again? Have ye no where else to trifle but upon the brink of Everlasting Ruin? Know you not that the Flames of Hell are ever a Moment

Moment ready to catch hold upon you? Surely it becomes you to stir as for your Lives: Do ye not tremble to think how dreadful your Case would be, if the blessed God should swear in his Wrath that his holy Spirit (whom ye have so often affronted and grieved) should strive no more with you? How can you read without Terrour such Passages as these in Scripture, Prov. 1. 24, &c. *Because I have called, and ye refused, &c. I also will laugh at your Calamity, and mock when your Fear cometh.* ——*Ye shall call upon me, but I will not answer.* Ezek. 24. 13. *Because I have purged thee,* (that is used Means in order to thy Reformation) *and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy Filthiness any more, till I have caused my Fury to rest upon thee.* Rev. 22. 11. *He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still,* &c. See also *Heb.* 10. 26, 27, 28, 29. &c.

Therefore I say again, 'tis no time to trifle, unless ye be prepared to undergo the Fury of the Almighty, who will certainly revenge the Injuries which have been done to his Patience and Long-suffering.

CHAP. VII.

Reproof to those Persons who wrong their own Souls by presumptuous Hopes of Heaven, while they are utter Strangers to this great work of Grace, whereby they should be prepared for it. Shewing how vain, sinful, dangerous *and* unnatural *it is for them thus to deceive themselves.*

THus we have considered several Inferences of Truth arising from the Doctrine. Let us now proceed to observe what further use may be made of it.

And here 'tis obvious, at first sight, that this Doctrine is also profitable for *Reproof* and *Correction*, as ye have already seen it is for *Instruction*, or the *Information* of your Judgments.

Well then, is it so that none can come to Heaven till they be prepared, and wrought for it by the Power of divine Grace? Certainly those Persons are great to be reproved who flatter themselves with the Hope of Eternal Happiness, tho they be utter Strangers to this renewing Change, this great preparing work: Alas! O how great is the number of such Persons! Should ye converse with all ye meet in the Streets, Markets, places, or in more Solemn Assemblies, and enquire of them concerning this Matter, would they not all of a Man tell you, that they *hope to be saved*; except perhaps some few poor trembling Christians, who scarce know how to think any thing well and comfortably con-

cern

concerning themselves: But as for the *loose Generality*, and *formal empty Professors*, which make up far the greater Number, 'tis likely some of them might take it as an Affront to have their Hopes of Heaven called in question: How common an Asseveration is it [*as I hope to be saved!*] O Sirs, if Salvation was as common as the hopes of it are, we would no more say that the *Gate is strait*, or *the Way narrow*, but rather that they are wide indeed: Nor would we say few find it, but few miss it.

'Tis the saying of a great Divine, —— "For my "own part if I had but one Sermon to preach while I "lived, I think this should be it, to perswade down "all your ungrounded hopes of Heaven; not to leave "you there in Despair, but that ye may hope upon "better Grounds, which will never deceive you, "[*Mr. Baxt. Saints Rest.*]

I have shewed you already how common it is for Men thus to abuse themselves with presumptuous hopes of Heaven: Give me leave also to tell you how *vain*, *sinful*, *dangerous*, and how *unnatural* it is so to do: And by consequence how justly such Persons deserve to be reproved.

First, 'Tis a vain thing for Men *thus* to deceive, and befool themselves. Their hopes of Salvation are lying Vanities, if we consider,

Either the { *Nature* or *Duration* } of them.

1. As to their Nature. They are meer Creatures of their own Imagination (and yet deserve not to be called *entia rationis* neither, for they are most highly irrational) empty Appearances, having no solid Consistency in them, no firm Foundation to stand upon, Sparks of their own kindling. How fitly are such hopes compared to a *Spiders Web*, Job 8. 13, 14. The Men are asleep in Sin, and lo, these are their Dreams! Or if ye will, they are distracted, not yet come to themselves, Eccl. 13-17. And these are the ravings of their distempered Imaginations: And all that Comfort which

they

they get by them is no better than Delusion, and Imposture. They put a Cheat upon themselves, and have to be told of it.

2. These hopes are vain as to their Duration, Job 20. 5. *The Triumphing of the Wicked is short, and the Joy of the Hypocrite but for a Moment. His Hope shall perish.* And as it is compared to the Spider's house [for so it is in the Hebrew, וּבַיִת עַכָּבִישׁ כְּסָלוֹ :] So 'tis said in the next words, *he shall lean upon his House, but it shall not stand; he shall hold it fast, but it shall not endure,* Job 8. 14, 15. The hopes of the Ungodly meet with frequent interruptions in this Life; Fears, Doubts and misgiving Thoughts do often disturb them in despight of their carnal Security: The Approaches of Death shake them yet more. But however, the first Moment of their entrance into Eternity puts an end to their foolish Presumptions for ever. Job 27. 8. *What is the hope of the Hypocrite when God takes away his Soul?* Chap. 11. 20. *The Eyes of the Wicked shall fail, and they shall not escape, and their Hopes shall be as the giving up of the Ghost.* Chap. 18. 5. *The Light of the Wicked shall be put out, and the Spark of his Fire shall not shine.* Thus ye see they trust in Vanity, feed upon Wind, and lie down in Sorrow at last.

Secondly, Their hopes are sinful. There is a great deal of Impiety and Wickedness in them. All the Attributes of God are affronted, and in some sort denied by such groundless Presumptions.

1. These impious hopes are utterly inconsistent with those Apprehensions which we ought to have concerning the *Holiness* and *Purity* of the Divine Nature. *He is glorious in HOLINESS; the foolish shall not stand in his sight, he is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity: He hateth the workers thereof.*

To imagine therefore that impure unrenewed Souls, should be admitted into the blessed Presence of God, and partake of the heavenly Joys, without being first wrought and prepared for it by sanctifying Grace: To suppose this, I say, would be to deny the Divine Holiness,

sub, or to obscure the Lustre and Glory of it: Yea, and to think that God is altogether such an one as themselves, Psal. 50. 21. O Sirs, were ye but duly sensible of his infinite Purity in whose sight the Heavens are not clean, Job 15. 15. it would make you cry out, *Who can stand before this* HOLY *Lord God?* Or to abhor your selves, and repent in Dust and Ashes, as a far better Man did, Job 42. 6. Or with the Evangelical Prophet to cry out, *Wo is me, for I am undone; because I am a Man of unclean Lips, —— for mine Eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts*, Isa. 6. 5. This would quickly drive you unto Christ, that under the shadow of his Wings ye might be safe.

2. The Truth of God is disowned and contradicted by these daring Presumptions. How great a matter doth God make of his Veracity: Psal. 138. 2. *I will praise thy Name for —— thy Truth, for thou hast magnified thy Word above all thy Name.* But, O what light account do these Self-deceivers make thereof! tho nothing is more earnestly, frequently and plainly inculcated in Scripture, than the necessity of Holiness to fit Men for Heaven: Tho they are told that the Flock of Christ is but a little Flock; and that few find the way that leads to Life: And that the Workers of Iniquity shall be doomed to depart from the blessed Presence of God for ever; Yet they go on in carnal Security, and hope still, as if all these Warnings were but idle Tales: Thus they impute Falsehood to the God of Truth. *He that believeth not God, hath made him a Liar*, 1 John 5. 10. Can there be more horrid Blasphemy then this?

3. The inflexible Justice and Righteousness of God are contemned and slighted by such Persons. Shall not the Judg of all the Earth do right? Will he justify the Wicked? No, no; they that do so, *are an Abomination to him*, Prov. 17. 15. Tho he be *merciful and gracious, long-suffering*, &c. yet *he will by no means clear the guilty*, Exod. 34. 6, 7. It is a Righteous thing with him to recompence Vengeance to the Ungodly, and in

so

so doing, he vindicates his own *Holiness, Truth,* and *Government. God that is holy, shall be sanctified in Righteousness,* Isa. 5. 16. Has he made Laws so just and good, and will he not keep up the honour of them, and see that they be duly executed? He needs not rule the World by Deceit, his Threatnings, as well as his Promises, are true; and the *final* Judgment will quickly convince the World that so it is. The Law which he has given us, is *a Rule to live by, and to be judged by.* Therefore as 'tis just, so 'tis certain, that the impious Hopes of wicked Men will be baffled and disappointed at last.

I might add, that the Patience, Goodness and Long-suffering of God are despised by such Persons, who wilfully continue in Sin, and yet think to escape his righteous Judgment, *Rom.* 2. 3, 4.

Thirdly, Such groundless Hopes are exceeding dangerous to themselves and others.

1. To themselves, as might easily be proved by many Particulars; I will mention only two.

(1.) Hereby they are hardened in their impenitent unregenerate State. These blind Presumptions are so many strong holds of Satan in their Souls, whereby he keeps Possession of them. As I may, at least allude to that, Luke 11. 21. *When a strong Man armed keeps his palace, his Goods are in peace.* A false Peace indeed, maintained and cherished by the Father of Lies, who is all the while carrying on his Design against them in the Dark, and when the Vail is drawn aside, will readily let them know that they have lost, and he has got the Game. Thus he blinds their Minds, and makes sport with them, (as the *Philistines* did with *Samson* when they had put out his Eyes) leads them Captive at his will.

These vain Hopes hinder the due Efficacy of the Means of Grace upon them: Tho we tell them of their Danger over and over, with never so much plainness, yet they foolishly conceit that their Case is safe enough: And this puts a stop to their further Endeavours

YOUR

wers; and so we are forc'd to leave them where we found them, or worse; flattering themselves, either that they are regenerate already, or else that they may be saved without so much ado. Those Convictions of the Sinfulness and Misery of their present State, which should help to prepare them for Christ, are by this means prevented. Mat. 9. 12. *They that be whole, need not a Physician, &c.* Thus it was with the Scribes and Pharisees; Are we blind also? Hence our Lord assures us *that Publicans and Harlots go into the Kingdom of God before such*, Mat. 21. 31, 32. *viz.* as being more likely to be brought to Conviction and Humiliation than those Self-conceited Pretenders were. Isa. 44. 20. *He feedeth on Ashes; a deceived Heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his Soul, nor say, is there not a Lie in my Right Hand?*

(2.) This unhappy Presumption makes their final Ruin more dreadful and amazing when it comes, Mat. 7. 26, 27. *He that heareth these Sayings of mine, and doth them not, shall be likened unto a Foolish Man, which built his House upon the Sand: And the Rain descended, &c. and it fell, and great was the fall of it.* A great fall indeed, when a Man who in his *expectations* was as high as Heaven, shall in *reality* find himself as low as Hell. This must needs be an astonishing Disappointment: And so much the more, because the Matter will then be past redress: O with what Anguish and Bitterness will they then cry out! Alas, are all our hopes of Heaven come to this! how will Conscience wrack and torment them for having slighted all the Warnings which were given them? How will the great Deceiver triumph and insult over them, when they are past hope and help for ever!

Tho the Destruction of all wicked Men will be terrible; yet that of Self-deceiving Hypocrites will be most surprising, because least expected. Isa. 33. 14. *The Sinners in Zion are afraid; Fearfulness hath surprized the Hypocrites: Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings,*

or

or with the Burnings of Eternity, [illegible]
1 Thess. 5. 3. *For when they shall say, Peace and Safety, then sudden Destruction cometh upon them.*

Then will they find to their endless Confusion, that there is no Peace to the wicked; tho before they would never be perswaded to believe it; they could not endure sound Doctrine, it was too strict for them, they had itching Ears, *Isa.* 30. 10. *Speak unto us smooth things.* But their Righteous Judg will not flatter them. The Flames of Hell will confute their Folly. To this is the Portion of them who forget God; thus shall their hope fail and rise no more. So dangerous are their Presumptions to themselves.

2. They are also dangerous to others, who from hence take encouragement to cherish the like groundless Hopes. Thus they mutually harden one another against God, as if they had made a Covenant with Death, and an Agreement with Hell. *For they have made Lies their Refuge, and under Falshood have they hid themselves,* Isa. 28. 15. As Noise and Company puts greater Boldness into Armies, than there is in single Persons alone; so is it here. As if God would spare them because of their Multitudes, tho his Holiness, Truth, and Justice are engaged to the contrary. How should such Men prosper? *Job.* 9. 4. Why, say they, we take no greater liberty, nor hope better for our selves, than our Neighbours do: What, shall none be saved but a few strict precise Persons, who pretend to greater Holiness and Diligence than all about them? God forbid. Thus they go on.

But stay a little, and consider the matter as you go. If ye be in the wrong, it is not your following a Multitude therein that will serve to excuse you. Have ye never read that Christ expects his Disciples should do more than others? *Matt.* 5. 47. And that he hath chosen them *out* of the World, and therefore they are not of it, nor must be conformed to it? Know therefore that these very Persons, who are most earnest and diligent in the way to Heaven, are withal most sensible

ble in how many things they fall short of their Duty; and least prone to flatter themselves with presumptuous Hopes. And are ye they that shall escape in your gross Negligence, and vain Confidence? No such matter.

Fourthly, and Lastly. It is very unnatural thus to sooth up your selves with vain Hopes. The Principle of Self-preservation is most deeply implanted in human Nature, and accordingly is wont to take place in all other Cases but this, where yet there is most need of it. If your *Lives, Liberties, Estates, Reputations*, &c. were in danger, how thankful would ye be to any that would warn you of that Danger, and help you to avoid it? But while your Souls are exposed to the utmost hazard, ye cannot endure to be told the truth of the case. *They hate him that reproveth in the Gate.* And thus they play about the sides of the Pit, and so drop in one after another, without so much as thinking seriously whither they are going, (as Flies about the Flame of a Candle, till it catch hold upon them) O more than brutish Stupidity! Is it not enough that Satan will do his worst to deceive you, but must ye also favour the Deceit, and take part with your Enemy against your selves? While your Friends stand by and pitty you, but cannot help you, because ye are resolved to have your own way.

Were not your Understandings made to enquire after Truth? Is it not *natural* to them so to do? Why then do ye keep them in an *affected* Ignorance of those things for which they were principally given you? And all this, while the Light shines round about you, tho ye close your Eyes against it; and that in a matter of everlasting consequence, even the One thing needful. It is not necessary that you be richer or greater in the World, more honoured or respected by others; or that ye fare more deliciously than your Neighbours; But 'tis highly necessary that your Peace be made with God through Christ, and the Diseases of your Souls healed by the Grace of the Spirit, or else

you

you are ruined for ever to all Intents and Purposes. How unnatural a thing is it to lay out your selves earnestly in providing for the Flesh, while the better part, even the immortal Soul, is betrayed, starved and undone.

Have ye not been told already, that your foolish Presumptions cannot be supported, except the very nature of things be overturned? Because Holiness is *essentially* included in the true Happiness of the rational Creature: And therefore to expect the one, without the other, is to separate a thing from it self: As if a Man should put out his own Eyes that he might see more clearly: Would not this be very natural think ye?

Ye see then how vain, sinful, dangerous and unnatural it is, thus to abuse your selves. I have considered these Particulars *distinctly*, tho indeed they cannot *really* be *divided*, being most intimately connected together, and involved one in the Nature of another; for Vanity in a reasonable Creature is sinful: If idle Words must be accounted for, to be sure idle Hopes will not pass free. Again, that which is sinful must needs be dangerous, nor doth any thing else deserve to be called dangerous but Sin; for 'tis this that puts a Sting into all Dangers whatsoever: But *he that walks uprightly, walks surely*. And then again, to run wilfully upon so much Vanity, Sin, and Danger, is certainly unnatural, if Self-Destruction deserve to be so called. And so it appears, how greatly those Persons are to be reproved, who thus cheat and impose upon themselves.

Object. But some will be ready enough to say, That this is strange kind of Doctrine, and that it is like, 1. To drive Men to Despair. And so, 2. to distract them. And then at last, 3. to break their Hearts. To which I answer.

Answ. It may perhaps be *strange* to you, (and so much the more is the pity, that ye should be no better acquainted with your Bibles:) But 'tis not so

left true for all that. As for the rest of the Objection,

1. Ye ought not to despair of finding Mercy with God through Christ upon Gospel-Terms: The infinite Goodness of God, and the sufficiency of Christ's Satisfaction are not to be doubted of; as great Sinners as you have been pardoned: And many also have perish'd who never sinned at the rate that ye have done. Take that along with you; as the former Consideration may keep you from sinful *Despair*, let the latter keep you from *Presumption*.

Let me therefore tell you withal, that you ought to despair of being saved in any other way, but what God has appointed. He is *merciful* indeed, but he is *also just and true*; *Except ye repent ye shall perish! The wicked shall be turned into Hell. If ye live after the Flesh ye shall die*, &c. Do not think that God will falsify his Word, to justify your Presumptions: Will ye slight his Mercy, and then complain of him as unmerciful?

As to the 2d. Have not such Persons the plain Symptoms of Distraction upon them already? Are they not laying violent Hands upon themselves? How can they be murder than they are, and yet they must not be told of it for fear of distracting or disturbing them? That is, we must not use our Endeavours to bring them to their Wits again.

As for the Third. *The Sacrifice of God is a broken Spirit*, Psal. 51. Your Hearts must be broken, that is, throughly humbled for your past Folly, in order to your future Reformation. You must be weary and heavy laden under a Sense of your Sins, that Christ may give you rest; broken, that he may heal you. *The whole need not a Physician.*

CHAP. VIII.

How much it concerns us to examin our selves, whether we be wrought for Heaven or no. Sundry Motives to excite us to this necessary Duty.

WE now proceed to an use of Examination. Is it so, that none can come to Heaven till they be wrought and prepared for it by special Grace? Surely 'tis high time to turn your Thoughts inward, and to stir up Conscience to do its Office, methinks ye should in this have been before-hand with me: I would be loth to suppose that ye should have heard all this, which has been said under the foregoing Heads concerning the Nature and Necessity of this great Work, with so little *Self-Application*, as not to have put the Question to your own Hearts before now.

Am I thus wrought upon? Have I experienc'd such a Change in the temper of my Spirit Godward as may encourage me to hope that I am past from Death to Life, disposed and inclined to be happy in the Injoyments of God? &c. A weighty Question indeed! 'tis all one as if you enquired whether ye were Heirs of Heaven, or within a step of Hell; Children of God or of the Devil. Or, as if a Line should be drawn to separate between the living and the dead in this Congregation: On the one side, lo, here are so many Persons wrought upon and quickened by the Spirit of God, who have the Principles and Seed of Eternal Life abiding in them.

On the other, lo, here are so many stupid, carnal, wretched Souls, under the just Wrath and Indignation

of the Almighty, *dead in Trespasses and Sins*; liable every Moment to the severe Strokes of avenging Justice.

'Tis not to be wondered at, if secret misgivings of Heart, and conscionsness of Guilt, cause an extreme Averseness in unregenerate Men to this work of Self-examination, and make them even afraid of conversing with themselves: As desperate Bankrupts who dread to look into their Books of Account, being sensible that Matters are ill with them.

And it is also sad, that there should be room for such a Question as this, or at least any great difficulty in resolving it. What! ye that have so long sate under the Means of Grace, and had these things so often and so earnestly prest upon you, and not yet wrought upon, not yet turned to God? This is a sad Case: yet (I fear) no *sadder* than *true*. O happy Congregation if *all*, yea or *most* in it, were thus prepared and fitted for Heaven! however, be your case what it will, 'tis necessary ye know it.

Therefore in handling this Use, I shall,

I. Lay down some *Motives* briefly to excite you to this Duty of Self-Examination.

II. Give some *Directions* for the more successful Management thereof.

III. Offer some *Questions* which ye may propose to your selves, in order to the trial of your State.

I begin with the first of these.

Motive 1. Some competent Knowledg of your Spiritual State and Condition is attainable. I might have exprest higher, but chose to proceed by Steps. Ye may indeed meet with some, who, to excuse their Ignorance or Sloth in this Matter, will tell you, no Man can know whether he be in a State of

Grace; or no; but that we must trust God with our Souls, and hope the best: And true it is that we must trust God with our Souls; but 'tis also as true, that he hath so far entrusted us with them, as to command our utmost Care and Diligence about them: And he will quickly call us to an account, how we have discharged our Trust; what we have done with *his Creature*? And if we be found to have betrayed our Souls by negligence and carnal Security, it will not serve our turn to say that we trusted him with them, unless ye can suppose that our *Presumption* should justify our *Carelessness*; that is, one Sin excuse another.

I tell you therefore, ye are not left under a necessitated unavoidable Ignorance in this Point. Your unacquaintance with your own Souls, as to their State Godward, is wilful and affected. I am not putting you upon Impossibilities. Others have attained not only to some *competent* Knowledg, but even to a *certainty* in the case; and that both ways. Thus Sinners are usually prepared for converting Grace, *viz.* by a thorow conviction of the Sinfulness and Misery of their unregenerate State: And on the other hand, many good Christians have arrived to a comfortable, quieting (and some even to a transporting) assurance of their saving special Interest in the Love of God through Christ, and consequently of their Right to Heaven, and that by the same Means and Helps which are vouchsafed, or offered to you.

Motive 2. To this end God hath given us the Faculty or Power of Self-Reflexion, that we might examine our Hearts and Lives, and so pass a right Judgment concerning our spiritual Estate. Prov. 20. 27. *The Spirit of Man is the Candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the Belly.* Conscience is [illegible] Light in the Soul, not to be extinguish'd or put under a Bushel, but to observe and try our selves by [illegible] 8. 11. *What Man knoweth the things of a Man, [illegible] Spirit of Man which is in him?* Were it not for [illegible]

Self reflective Power, we should not be capable of *moral Government* in a rational way; how should we rectify what is amiss, or enjoy the Comforts of sincere Obedience, but by examining both our hearts and Lives?

Therefore I say, Conscience is a *Witness*, a *Judge*, yea and a *Executioner* too: It not only bears Testimony, but passeth Sentence, and inflicts Punishment, or yields Refreshment and Peace, and so gives Men the foretasts of Heaven or Hell while they are on Earth. *Præmium ante præmium*: or *præjudicium futuri judicii*. 1 Joh. 3. 20, 21. *If our Heart condemn us, God is greater than our Heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our Heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.* Must ye not own such a Faculty? Verily Conscience would flie in your Faces, if ye should deny its Power.

Motive 3. Consider that God hath given you a sure Rule to try your selves by, even his holy Word, by which he himself will try you at last.

Tis the nature of a Law to constitute what shall be due *from* us, and what to us; a Rule to live by, and by which we must be judged.

Heb. 4. 12. *The Word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged Sword, —— and is a Discerner of the Thoughts and Intents of the Heart.* Here we may behold the Comliness or Deformities of our own Souls; as a man doth his natural Face in a Glass: We need not say, *who shall ascend into Heaven?* The Word is nigh us, whereby we must search our selves: And whether we will attend to it or no, we must stand or fall by it at last. Joh. 12. 48. *The Word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last Day.* This is one of those Books that shall be opened, and the final Sentence will pass according to what is written therein; Rev. 20. 12. *They shall be judged according to their works*; the *Matter of Fact* being recorded in their Book [Conscience], the *Matter of Right* in God's Law; and the

the Conclusion in his Doctrine. [As Mr. Baxter upon the place.]

Motive 4. We are expressly commanded, thus to examine and try our selves; yea it is mentioned as a great Absurdity, that a Christian should be ignorant of himself. 2 Cor. 13. 5. *Examine your selves, whether ye be in the Faith; prove your own selves: Know ye not your own selves?* &c. As if he had said, Is there any thing nearer to you than your selves? any thing that ye are more concerned to know than your spiritual Estate; that is, whether Christ be in you or no. (Are the ways to Heaven and Hell so much alike, that a Man cannot know whither he is going if he would? If the *Ends* be so vastly different, surely there must be a proportionable difference in the *Ways* that lead to them.

Motive 5. Ye have comfortable Encouragement to expect the help of the holy Spirit in this work of Self-Examination.

Suppose ye be yet in an unregenerate State; 'tis true ye have then no *full proper Covenant-Right* to the Influences of the Spirit, yet ye have great reason to hope, that (since he hath been often striving with you, to bring you to a sight and sense of your spiritual Concerns) he will not deny the help of his Grace, if ye set your selves in good earnest to the Work, by the assistance already received. Prov. 1. 23. *Turn you at my Reproof; behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you,* &c. Now 'tis the work of the Spirit to lead Men into their own Hearts, to convince them of Sin, and to *quicken, illuminate,* and *draw,* dead, dark, disaffected Souls to the love of God and Holiness.

But if ye be already converted; ye have then a *Covenant-Right* to the help of the Spirit; ye have *full* and *proper* Promises to plead in this Matter; he is the Spirit of Christ your Head; and therefore all the living Members, by virtue of their Relation unto Christ, are also nearly

nearly related to, and interested in, that Holy Spirit, whole Office it is to refresh and comfort those Souls whom he hath first renewed by his Grace, to discover to them the Grace which he has given them, to witness with their Spirits that they are the Children of God; and so to enable them to rejoice therein.

Motive 6. Think well, how sad and wretched a case it is to be utterly in the dark as to your spiritual State. Ye cannot tell *what a Day may bring forth*, Prov. 27. 1. For ought ye know ye may be in Hell the next hour, because ye are uncertain whether God be your Friend or your Enemy; whether ye have any saving Interest in Christ; whether ye be sanctified by the Spirit, or not. Is not this a woful Case, when thou liest down, when thou risest up, when thou goest out or comest in, thou knowest not but that the very next Moment the divine Fury may rest upon thee! Can'st thou think of Death, and not tremble, and of Judgment, and not be astonish'd? When thou art invited to a Funeral, how can'st thou forbear thinking, that it will quickly be thine own Case? and yet thou art ignorant what will become of thy immortal Soul at that Day: Methinks this should make thee a Terrour to thy self, and to all that are about thee.

Motive 7. Consider how impatient thou art of being in suspence, or at uncertainty in Matters of far less consequence. If thou have but a Law-Suit in Hand, how uneasy till thou know the Issue; if a Purchase to make, how careful to see that the Title be good, and the Conveyances firm and sure: If thou be taken with any threatning Distemper, how earnest and solicitous art thou to know what the Physician thinks of thy Distemper. Pray Sir, What think you? Did you ever see any in such a Case before? Did they recover? Do you hope the Distemper may go off? But O, how few are there that express any such Care about their Souls! how few that will come to a Minister and enquire of

him. O Sir! *What shall I do to be saved?* I fear I am not yet wrought for Heaven. I find my Heart dead to Spiritual Things, but vigorous and sprightly in its Pursuits after worldly Vanities; I find I am out of my Element, when engaged in Religious Duties: What think you? Is there any Hope? O help me speedily, lest Death overtake me unprepared for it! O how seldom do we meet with any that shew such a concern for their Souls as this?

If were easy to heap up many more such Considerations as these, to excite you to this necessary work of *Self-Reflection*: I shall only add as follows, without the Formality of making distinct Heads.

Think with your selves, how *common* a thing it is for men to be mistaken about their Spiritual Estate; and withal how *dangerous* it is; remember, God himself will quickly judg you, and the way to escape the Severity of his Judgment is to enter into Judgment with your selves. 1 Cor. 11. 31. *If we would judge our selves, we should not be judged.*

Moreover, either ye *are* thus wrought for Heaven by renewing Grace, or *not*. If ye be, the closest trial will greatly refresh and comfort you, by discovering that the work is already done: Then may ye comfortably go on with the remaining part of Duty, which is yet before you; ye may come with boldness to the Throne of Grace, as Children to a Father: Ye may read or hear the Word of God with Joy, when the great Promises of the Gospel are all your own: Ye may come with Confidence to the Lord's Table, when ye know that *Christ himself*, and *all his saving Benefits* are yours: Ye may meditate delightfully upon the heavenly Inheritance, when ye know that ye have a right to it. This will support you under all the Sufferings of the present Life, and will make them appear *light Afflictions* indeed. And besides all this, it will much conduce to the credit of your Profession, by enabling you to go on chearfully in the ways of Religion; as Men that do not repent of their Choice, nor despair of their Caution of their God.

But

But on the other hand, if ye be unregenerate; Self-reflection is one of the first Steps in order to your Recovery. Psal. 119. 59. *I thought on my Ways, and turned my Feet unto thy Testimonies.* So did the Prodigal when he came to himself, *Luk.* 15. 17. When once Men begin to be solicitous about the Concerns of their Souls, and to enquire, What have we done? What are we doing? Whither are we going? How shall we escape the Wrath to come? This looks hopefully indeed; tho ye must not stop here neither, nor take up with *Convictions* instead of *Conversion.* However, think not that your Wounds are like to be cured, without being searched.

But if through a stupid unconcernedness as to the Affairs of your Souls, ye think it not worth the while to give your selves all this trouble, who in the mean time, ye are eagerly set upon this present World, (as the common Case is) I can then tell you what your Case is, without any further enquiry; ye may spare the Labour of searching whether ye be regenerate or no; for to deal plainly with you, 'tis certain ye are not. Your brutish Stupidity is evidence enough to prove that ye are asleep, yea *dead* in Sin, condemned already, and that *the Wrath of God abideth on you.* In a word, *as the Lord liveth*, there is but a step betwixt you and Hell.

But yet a step there is; your case is not quite *desperate*, tho it be very *dangerous*: I must say of you, as of those Patients whose Condition seems very hazardous, the Event is uncertain; but while there's Life there's Hope. Some have recovered, who seem'd to be in as ill Circumstances as you; but let me tell you many more have perish'd.

Even so it is here; some have been converted, and saved, who were once as dead and stupid about the Concerns of their Souls as ye are; But many more have been lost for ever. Therefore to flatter you in such a condition, might contribute much to your ruin, which I am not willing to do.

Therefore, I tell you, there is but *so much* hope of your

your Salvation, as there is of your awakening from this carnal Security, and so repenting and turning to God, *and no more.*

CHAP. IX.

Directions for the more successful management of this great Duty of Self-Examination.

HAving laid down the fore-going Motives, to excite you to this necessary Duty of Self-Reflection, and shew'd you of how ill signification it is for Men to be unconcern'd and indifferent about the State of their Souls: I now come to give some Direction, for the help of such as are sollicitous to know whether they be wrought for Heaven or no?

Direction 1. Take care that ye be *impartial* in your search, that your Judgments be not perverted or biass'd either way, by *fear* or *favour*; but that ye may go according to evidence. The greatest Danger indeed *is on the one side*, viz. Left Pride or Self-Love make you judg too favourably concerning your selves. But here remember, that such a mistake may prove your ruin: 'Tis necessary ye know the worst of your case while there is yet hope of redress. Ye have already heard what Multitudes there are that perish by Presumption: To think *falsly* that ye are in the way to Heaven will never bring you thither; nor will it cure the Diseases of your Souls, to suppose that ye are well enough already; such Ravings are a sad Symptom that your noblest Faculties are impaired and distracted, and therefore that your Distempers are so much the more

danger-

dangerous. But I need not enlarge upon this, only remember, that God will quickly try all over again; and whatever your present Judgment be of your selves, his final Judgment will be *according to Righteousness*.

On the other Hand, some are so *timorous* and *dejected* in spirit, that they know not how to believe any thing that is *good* and *comfortable* concerning themselves: So far are they from presumptious Self-Conceit, that they run into a quite contrary *extream*, and standing in their own Light, cannot discern the Evidences of their Sincerity. Fain they would be assured that their Hearts are right with God, but have not *strength of Spirit* enough to conclude that it is so, through meer fear, lest it should prove otherwise: They vehemently *wish it*, but cannot perswade themselves to *believe* it; still thinking 'tis too good News to be true. Like Old *Jacob*, when they told him *that Joseph was alive*, *his Heart fainted, for he believed them not*, Gen. 45. 26. or as the poor Jews, *when the Lord turned again the Captivity of* Zion, *they were like them that dream*, Psal. 126. 1. They could scarce believe their own Senses and Understandings in the Matter. Even so it is with many poor, melancholly, doubting Christians; they *desire* to be sincere, but *fear* that they are not so: And those Evidences of true Grace which to *another* would be discernable, to *them* are not so. Now, I say, tho such Persons be safe in the Hands of Christ, notwithstanding all their Doubts and Jealousies concerning themselves, and so their mistake cannot prove *destructive*, as in the former Case. Yet it is of consequence *enough*, both in point of *Duty*, and *Comfort*. *Prudence* will teach us to be wary and cautious in so great an Enquiry, to suspect our own Deceitful Hearts, and to watch them narrowly lest they should betray us to vain Hopes; and *Humility* will teach us to entertain low Thoughts of our selves: But still 'tis *unnatural* to shut our Eyes against that Light which should refresh and comfort us; and *unthankful* to overlook or deny the

Riches

Richest of Grace, which have been laid out upon us. *Fear* as well as *Favour*, is an Enemy to *right and impartial* Judgment.

Direct. 2. This Enquiry must be managed with a great deal of Care and Seriousness. 'Tis a Matter of Life and Death that is before you, and therefore ye had need have your Wits about you. A mistake on the *one Hand* may destroy your Souls for ever: On the *other*, it may greatly obstruct your spiritual Comfort and growth in Grace. Therefore the most sober judicious Consideration is *here* necessary. Call in your wandering Thoughts, keep them close to the work, let them not give you the slip, lest they grow masterless and unruly: *Commune with your Hearts, and let your Spirit make diligent search*, Psal. 77. 6. There's no trifling in Matters of this Nature; 'tis not a few slightly transient thoughts that will serve the turn, the Principles of Grace lie deep in the Soul, ye must search for them as for hid Treasure, if you would discover them: And there are depths of Wickedness too, which must in like manner be searched after with great Care and Strictness; if ye would pass a right Judgment of your own Case, ye must excite your sluggish Hearts to the work; and if your Thoughts fly off from the Business, let Reason interpose its Authority, otherwise a thousand Impertinences will intrude upon you, and so ye will be left in as great darkness and uncertainty, in reference to your spiritual Estate, as ye were in before.

In a word, intensness of thought is needful in this work, that so nothing may escape your mistake various, which might any way conduce to clear up the Point in Hand.

Direct. 3. See that ye proceed with due order and method, in this Business; otherwise ye will confound, perplex and entangle your selves to no purpose. Difficult Cases are not to be resolved without an *orderly*

Proceedure of Thoughts about them. Confusion is the great Enemy to all true Knowledge of what kind soever. Take care that ye do not begin at the wrong end first; let *Preliminaries* be well adjusted, before ye come to the Point it self. Under this Head, take your work in the following *order*.

1. Understand aright what you are to enquire after, lest ye *mistake* the Question. The thing to be known, is, whether ye be so far wrought for Heaven, that if it should please God *immediately* to require your Souls of you, it would go well with them in another State: That is, whether the condition of your Souls be such, that come Life, come Death, they are safe? Now here it's plain that ye may easily deceive your selves, by stating the Question too *high*, or too *low*.

If ye only enquire, whether there be any good in you which hath a tendency towards this great work of Regeneration, ye then fall *short* in the Point; for I have told you before, that there may be very deep *Convictions* of the necessity of this renewing Change, yea and some saint *Essays*, *Resolutions*, or *Endeavours* towards it, which are only the Effects of *common* Grace, and if they be rested in, do as certainly end in Destruction, as down right Profaneness does.

Again, there are various Degrees and Measures of Grace among the People of God themselves: All that are sincere are not of the same *stature* or *standing*; some have received more Talents, a greater stock of Grace than others. If therefore ye enquire immediately whether ye have attained to such or such Measures, to which some others (who perhaps are above you) have arrived; ye then lay a Snare for your own Comfort and Peace by carrying the Question too high at *first*. Your present Business is to examine whether your Graces be *sincere*; as for the *degree* of them, let that be enquired into afterward. 'Tis likely ye are not so *good* as the best, nor so *bad* as the worst; the Question is whether of the two ye are more like to in [illegible]. Do not

phancy

[illegible] your selves Saints, because ye are not so vile [illegible] vilest: For among unregenerate Persons themselves [illegible] all are not alike scandalous and hardened in Sin: N[illegible] yet must ye conclude that ye are Graceless, becau[illegible] some others out-strip you in Holiness. There is [illegible] *infant* as well as a more *strong* and *confirmed* State [illegible] Grace.

2. Study well the Rule by which ye are to try you[illegible] selves. *Search the Scriptures, to the Law and to t[illegible] Testimony*; by this ye must try the Spirits and th[illegible] Doctrines of other Men: How much more nearly doth it concern you to examin your own Hearts and Live[illegible] thereby? Acquaint your selves well with the *Tenour* o[illegible] the Covenant of Grace; upon what Terms Pardo[illegible] and Life are offered to poor Sinners; what is *essentiall* necessary to the *Being* of a sincere Christian, as such; and what is *further requisite* to his Establishment, Com[illegible] fort and *Well-being*. In the sacred Records ye may find the Nature of those Graces, which qualify and fit Men for Eternal Life; and also the Examples of many, who are gone to Heaven before us, what their Hearts were set upon; how they lived, and how they died: here ye may learn what ye ought to be; where to place your Affections; how to regulate your Lives, that ye may be happy. Ye may see the Characters by which the Heirs of Heaven must be known; and also the opposite Description of those who shall be excluded from that Felicity. He is unfit to be a Judg, who is ignorant of the Law or Rule of Judgment. It therefore much concerns you, to converse much with the Holy Scriptures, and to understand the true *spiritual* sense and meaning of them, *which are able to make you wise to Salvation*. From hence ye must take your Measures in judging of the Sincerity of your Faith, Repentance, Love, Obedience, *&c.* that so ye may not take up with the empty *Name* of Grace, instead of the *thing*: to [illegible] as too many through Sloth and affected Ignorance do.

And here ye must remember, *that the Commandment of God is exceeding broad*, extending not only to the Gover-

Government of our *outward* Actions and Behaviour, but also to the inward Principles from whence those Actions flow, viz. all the Faculties and Powers of our Souls, Understanding, Will, Imagination, Affection, Sense, Appetite, Habits, Dispositions, *&c.* must be ruled and governed by the Rule, and *that* in all circumstances, at all times, and in all places, without exception. The Tree must be made good that the Fruit may be so. God has imprinted his holy Image upon his Word, and makes use of it as an *Instrument* to work a suitable Impression upon us.

2. Ye are next to examin strictly your own Hearts and Lives, and compare them with the Rule, or try them by it; remember I am now speaking only in *general*, to prepare you for those particular Questions which are design'd as a further help for the Discovery of your Case.

Only at present let me tell you, ye are not to judg of the State of your Souls by what is *unusual* and *extraordinary* with you, but by the *habitual* bent of your Hearts, and the *stated ordinary* course and tenour of your Lives. An Hypocrite may have some *transient* Affections and Emotions of Soul towards spiritual Things, and some seeming Fits of Religion for a while; and yet afterwards return with the Dog to his vomit again. *Herod* heard *John Baptist* gladly, and did many things. Those on the Rock heard the Word and anon with Joy received it, but had not root in themselves. *Matt.* 13. Observe *here*, a living Principle of Grace is a *rooted* Principle, fixt in the Heart, and there kept alive by the same Power which implanted it. 'Tis said of him that is born of God, *that his Seed remaineth in him*, 1 *Joh.* 3. 9. In short, the *Will* is the Man, and the sincerity of its Resolutions must be known by suitable Endeavours, and the sincerity of those Endeavours by their Success: Of which more hereafter. Or if ye take the easiest way, by the main drift and course of your Lives, ye may know what are the prevailing habits and dispositions of your Souls, (for Men will act according to

to their predominant Habits) and by these ye may know your State, that is, by reducing all to the Scripture Rule, as has been said already: Thus must ye try and judge your selves.

4. Ye are then to proceed to Sentence, which is nothing else but the Conclusion that must be drawn from the fore-going Premisses, *viz.* the Law and Fact compared together: Here again keep your hearts close to the Work, and bring it to an issue. Sooner or later this must be done, and the sooner the better. If upon a thorow Enquiry thou find thy self to be yet in an unregenerate State, pass sentence accordingly; it will signify nothing to put it off. Be thy Case better or worse, labour to know it, and come to a Conclusion what it is.

5. Lastly, see that thy Soul be affected with the discovery thou hast made. Take it to heart, that thou may'st be prepared for what further work is before thee. Thus proceed *orderly*.

Direct. 4. Remember that a great deal of patience and constancy is, *ordinarily*, requisite for the right carrying on this great Work of Self-Examination. Do not think that so weighty a Point is like to be resolved all on a sudden. Ye must search and search again; 'tis a Work that must be done, and therefore do not faint down in Discouragement. What tho ye long continue in Doubt, the case is not singular; many good Christians are kept a great while in suspense betwixt Hopes and Fears as to their Sincerity, and that many times for want of Constancy and Judgment in the management of this Duty of *Self-Reflection*; and even those who have arrived to a more comfortable assurance in this Matter do yet see reason to be often renewing the Tryal, and to look over their Evidences again; as well knowing what need there is to go upon solid Ground, and what a treacherous thing the Heart of Man is. The truth is, it should be accounted part of our daily Business, as Christians, to continue in holy

Heart

Hearts by way of Self-Examination; not that we should be always calling in question our State *as to the main*; yet even *that* should sometimes be done, so far as to review the Discoveries which we have formerly made, and to try the Grounds upon which we have proceeded, especially upon some particular occasions; as when Temptations arise, or when we are called to any extraordinary Duty or Office; yea, or after some *actual* fall into Sin, or when Distempers threaten our Dissolution; as also before we approach the Lord's Table, 'tis but fit that we examin the Evidences of our Sincerity; not so as to give way to unjust Doubts and Jealousies, but to quiet, compose, and support our Souls in Peace.

Direct. 5. Lastly, see that this Work be rightly circumstantiated both as to Time and Place.

As for the latter of these. Withdraw your selves from the noise and hurry of worldly Business, that ye may *attend upon this Work without Distraction:* Enter into your Closets, shut the Door upon you, set your selves as in the Presence of the great God; remember that he is the most reverend Witness of all your Proceedings, who stands by and judgeth you while you are judging your selves: A due Sense of this or nothing will overawe your Minds, and make you *impartial* and *serious* in the Business.

As for the circumstance of Time. Have a care of *needless* delays in this Matter; yet do not rush precipitantly upon it, when you are unfit for such an undertaking. Take such a season for it (as soon as possible) when your Spirits are lively, your Heads clear, your Affections calm and composed: Otherwise, if ye set about it when your Heads are confused, your Spirits dejected or oppress'd with Melancholly, *&c.* and so your Passions tumultuous and afloat, ye will make nothing of it. And therefore ye shall sometimes find that Satan himself (tho the greatest Enemy to this Work of Self-examination) will transform himself into an Angel of Light, and put a poor trembling Soul upon this work,

when he knows it is unfit for it; and as ready will he be to triumph over such Persons, and to tempt them to despair, when he sees they are baffled, and confounded in their search.

Thus I have endeavoured to direct you in this Point.

I hope I need not tell you, that in all this 'tis necessary to implore the Divine Assistance, humbly begging of him who is the Searcher of Hearts, that he would lead you into your own Souls, and not suffer you to be mistaken in a Matter of such consequence. Tell him, ye cannot be satisfied to hang in suspence, but do sincerely desire to know the truth of your Case, be it better or worse, and that he himself has commanded you to search and try your selves; that the work is difficult, and ye dare not undertake it in your own strength: In short, that ye are resolved to rely upon him, who is not wont to fail them that seek him and put their trust in him, according to his own appointed way. Say with the Psalmist, Psal. 139. 23, 24. *Search me, O God, and know my Heart: Try me, and know my Thoughts. And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

CHAP. X.

Sundry Questions proposed by which to examin the State of our Souls.

THese general Directions being premised, we now come to offer you some further help, or to lead you by the Hand through the Duty it self; that so ye may at length discover how the case stands with you in reference to Eternity.

And

And here let me first tell you, that the main Point to be enquired into, is, how your Souls are affected towards the glorious blessed God himself. This is the *grand comprehensive* Question, the Rule and Measure of all the rest, which are entirely subordinate to it. Observe it well, stop a little and consider it: 'Tis this which must help you to understand, remember, and truly to resolve what further Enquiries shall be offered to you, as being the Center wherein they all meet, the End whereunto they are all design'd: If, as to the main, ye be right here, viz. If your Souls be duly affected towards God, all's your own, you may then conclude that you are wrought for Heaven indeed; ye shall not miss of Happiness, if there be enough in the infinite All-sufficient God to make you happy. Luk. 15. 31. *Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.*

Well then, if in your most serious deliberate Judgment ye do highly esteem him, as infinitely good in himself, and the most suitable good for you.

Again, if your Wills and Hearts do sincerely cleave to him, love him, rest in him, resolve for him, as such.

And then, if the stated Course of your Lives be in the main agreeable to such *Apprehensions*, and *Resolutions*. Ye may then *go your way, eat your Bread with Joy, and drink your Wine with a merry Heart, because God accepteth you*, Eccles. 9 7.

Yet let me further add, there's a great deal goes to prove that this is *really* and *truly* your case. Most Men will be ready to say, that they esteem and love God above all. *With their Mouth they shew much Love*, Ezek. 33. 31. Nor would any have been more forward in so professing, than those very Persons to whom our Lord speaks, John 5 42. *I know you, that ye have not the Love of God in you.*

Let me therefore help you to find out the Truth of your Case, by the following Questions.

Question 1. *How do ye relish the notion of an Happiness which consists in the enjoyment of God?* I beseech you

deal truly and faithfully with your Souls in this; put it close and home to your own Consciences: Consider it well before ye answer it: 'Tis likely, by this time, ye may have learn'd to say that there is no other Happiness comparable to this; and that 'tis the enjoyment of God which makes Heaven to be Heaven! and it may be your Understandings are in some measure convinced of the Truth of what ye say, (or else I am sure a great deal of pains has been taken with you to little purpose.) But for all that, I must tell you, the Question is not yet half answered, the main Point is yet behind; the great work of Regeneration lies principally in the WILL. Search therefore a little further, ye may chance to find that your Hearts are more deceitful in this matter than ye thought of; examin *narrowly* how *they* stand affected. Right Notions are far more common in the World (as dark as it is) than answerable Affections and Tendencies of Soul are.

Come then, let us go a little deeper into the Case. Ye say ye believe there is no Happiness to be compared with the enjoyment of God: But do ye *feel* what ye say? Are your Hearts moving towards this Happiness? Lord, I have heard, and believe that thou hast purposed to make thy People blessed in the enjoyment of thy self; 'tis this that my panting Soul breaths after: I plainly feel that nothing else will content me; grant me this, and I have all; I can have no *greater*, I desire no *other* Blessedness: Lord, may I but know thee better, and love thee more, even as much as my Nature is capable of, and enjoy the everlasting Sense of thy Love in a state of perfect Holiness and Purity, I have then enough, I desire no more; whatever else goes under the name of Happiness in the World, is but an empty Notion; thou, O Lord, art my Portion, my All. If these or such like Requests be *really* expressive of the *inward, deep, habitual* workings of your Souls, ye may then boldly conclude that God will not frustrate nor disappoint such Desires as these which his holy Spirit hath kindled in you. Those, who thus esteem and

and long for the Heavenly Felicity, shall have it: *Hold on therefore to the end, he is faithful that hath promised:* If it be thus with you, I tell you, ye are safe.

But on the other Hand; if when ye hear mention made of such a Happiness, ye do, upon deep and impartial search, find no suitableness in the *Temper* and *Tendencies* of your Souls, no Desires after it, but rather a secret *recoiling* and *drawing* back from it; if, I say, the case be so with you, methinks, I need not tell you ye are not like to be happy in that to which your Hearts are so disaffected. Is not this plain enough? How shall I make it plainer? The Lord help you to understand and consider it: I know carnal Minds are very stupid and blockish as to the apprehension of such things as these. Let me try a little further if I can drive it into you.

Suppose God should say to you, as once he did to *Solomon*, 1 Kings 3. 5 *Ask what I shall give thee.* What shall I do for thee to make thee happy? Ask freely, speak thy Mind, let me hear what thou wouldest chuse for thy self.

Why, here I say, if thou canst form to thy self any other notion of Happiness that thou wouldst rather chuse than *that* whereof we have been speaking, *viz.* which consists in the enjoyment of God: I tell thee thou art in a woful case. Acts 8. 22. 23. *Repent therefore of this thy Wickedness; and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thy Heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the Gall of Bitterness, and in the Bond of Iniquity*

Suppose thou mightst enjoy perfect bodily Health, and fulness of worldly Prosperity and Ease, and this for ever: If, I say, thou couldst be content with *this* for thy Portion; to deal plainly with thee, thou art a graceless wicked Wretch.

Quest. 2. *What feeling Apprehensions have ye concerning the woful Corruption of human Nature, especially in respect of its Aversion from God, and Enmity against him?* Were

you ever made deeply sensible of this, and throughly humbled for it, so as to lament and bewail it before the Lord? If not, ye may conclude your selves to be yet under the power of it; and therefore Strangers to this great work of Grace, which we are searching after. *Quare vitia sua nemo confitetur? quia etiam nunc in illis est. Somnium narrare vigilantis est, & vitia sua confiteri sanitatis indicium est.* Senec.

But if indeed the case be better with you, and the bent of your hearts be turned towards God through Christ; having first been made sensible of your sinful and unhappy estrangedness from him by Nature: Yet ye cannot but know that there are *still* some Remainders of your old Distemper; Do ye not feel them? Is it possible they should escape your observation? Can ye feel them, and not groan bitterly under them, and long to be delivered from them, that ye may be perfectly reconciled unto him, who is infinite amiable Goodness it self? Are ye not sensibly affected, even the best of you, to find that your Apprehensions concerning God are yet so *dark* and *confused?* And that the workings of your Hearts towards him are so *dull* and *languid*, so *slow* and *heavy*, after all that he has done to draw you by his loving Kindness? Can ye think of your unkind disingenuous Carriage to so good a God, and not be asham'd and blush at it? Doth it not make you even a Burden to your selves? Can ye forbear crying out in the anguish of your Souls, and pleading earnestly with God on this account; Lord, if it be so, why am I thus? Must I still be complaining, and yet get no nearer thee? O my God, how long! how long! Canst thou behold this Soul that sighed from thee the *Father of Spirits*; Lord canst thou see it lie groveling in the Dust, and looking towards thee for help, and wilt thou not pitty it? Where are thy wonted Compassions, and the sounding of thy Bowels? Surely they are not restrained? Must mine Eyes still fail with looking upwards? O Lord, I must not, I dare not, I cannot entertain hard Thoughts of thee: no, no; 'tis I that have so often grieved

grieved thy Holy Spirit, and therefore have no more of his help vouchafed me.

I tell you, Sirs, the holieſt Perſons are moſt ſenſible of the weight of indwelling Corruption, they *ſtrive*, they *pray*, they *watch*, and *war* againſt it; the nearer they are to God, the more ſenſible of their yet remaining diſtance from him: Nor is there any thing for which they more loath themſelves, than for the Remnants of their Averſion from him.

Queſt. 3. *How ſtand ye affected to the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, as he is the Way to the Father, the principal Means to bring us to the Knowledg and Love of God; to Reconciliation and Communion with him, and to the everlaſting enjoyment of him?* Do ye highly value him as ſuch? Do ye ſtudy to acquaint your ſelves with him, to live by Faith upon him, and in holy Obedience and Conformity to him; that ſo the ends of his Office may take place with you, *viz.* that ye may be brought nearer to God by him? Are ye willing to look unto his *Scepter*, and acknowledg his *Soveraignty*, as well as to rely upon his *Satisfaction?* What form, what comlineſs do ye behold in him? Is he the chiefeſt among ten thouſand to you? Have ye well conſidered, *who*, or *what* he is? *Even the brightneſs of his Fathers Glory, and the expreſs Image of his Perſon: God manifeſted in the Fleſh: The great* Immanuel, *God with us:* That the Eternal Word and Wiſdom of the Father was cloathed with human Nature, pitched his Tent among the Sons of Men: ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν; *Joh.* 1. 14. Convers'd familiarly even with the meaneſt Perſons, breathing out Love, Compaſſion, Tenderneſs, and Benignity towards all, even towards his bitterest Enemies; weeping over Self-deſtroying Sinners, and at laſt offering up himſelf a *Propitiatory* Sacrifice for us, *&c.*

O think, and think again, who it was that did all this, even the God of Heaven himſelf, appearing *in the likeneſs of ſinful fleſh*, Rom. 8. 3. O let thoſe words ſink deep into your Hearts, John 14. 9. *He that hath ſeen me, hath ſeen the Father.* All this was the Lord's do-

ing; lo, this was the wonderful condescending way which God was pleased to make choice of, therein to shew us his amiable Goodness; that hereby our aversion from him might be healed. Could Men or Angels have thought of such a Contrivance as this; or if they had, durst they have mention'd it? But *God's thoughts are not as ours.* O the depths of his Wisdom! How will these things transport us when we come to Heaven!

What say ye to all this? *Unto them that believe, Christ is precious*; Is he so to you? Are ye willing to take up your Cross and follow him? to give up your selves sincerely to him? Is there any thing which you think too dear to part with if he call for it, nay, tho it were Life it self? Know ye not that every true Christian is in *disposition* a Martyr? Doth not our Lord tell us, *that if we love our own Lives more than him, we cannot be his Disciples?* Doth this Saying offend you? Or do ye think it hard? What if I should tell you, how earnestly desirous many of the primitive Christians were to lay down their Lives for the Testimony of Jesus? How they triumphed in the midst of their sharpest Sufferings, while the Sense of the dying Love of Jesus Christ was warm and fresh upon their Spirits, Insomuch that *Cyprian* was fain to write for the comfort of such who were troubled, that they mist of their Hopes of Martyrdom.

O how is the case altered now! what would those Christians say if they saw us at this day? *How much we mind our own things, and how little the things of Christ.* Would they not think, either that Christianity is altered, or rather that we scarce deserve to be called Christians?

Quest. 4. *How are ye disposed to spiritual Exercises? What delight do ye take in drawing nigh to God?* All Creatures act according to their several Natures, 'tis pleasant and agreeable to them so to do: If therefore ye have a new Nature in you, a Principle of divine spiritual Life, ye will thereby be enclined to holy Exercises; ye will move as it were *naturally* towards them;

ye

ye will be serious and fervent in them; and that for holy Purposes and Ends.

That empty shew of Religion, whereby Hypocrites profane holy things, and deceive their own Souls, is a vain lifeless formal thing, a meer piece of *Pageantry*; they neither well know *what* they are doing, nor *why* they do it: 'Tis rather *forc'd* than *natural*, *customary* than *conscientious*. No wonder if such be soon weary of Duty, as being Strangers to the sweetness of it! Job. 27. 10. *Will he* (namely the Hypocrite) *delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God?*

But now, a truly Religious Person acts in these Matters at another rate. He believes that *God is, and that he is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek him*: Yea, that he himself will be their *exceeding great Reward*: And this it is that such a Soul longs after; having chosen God for his Portion; therefore he reckons that a day employ'd in the Service of God is better than a thousand elsewhere.

Holy Souls experience that their spiritual Strength is renewed by waiting upon God; that their Graces are increased by exercise; that their Souls are cleansed and purified, their Corruptions mortified and subdued; and in a word, that the holy Worship of the most holy God helps to make them more like him: And in all this they find those inward relishes of Delight and Pleasure, whereby they are fully convinced, that it is no less their privilege and advantage that they *may*, than their Duty that they *must* attend upon God. They had rather be cut short as to their daily Bread, than denied the liberty of approaching the Throne of Grace. In short, they have Meat to eat which the World knows not of. Thus their Principles incline them to suitable Operations, their Habits to Acts.

If therefore ye find no inclination to Religious Duties, but can without any regret let such Opportunities over-slip you, having no Delight nor Pleasure in them: But think, if ye durst, ye could live well enough without them. I can then tell you, that ye have no Principle of spiritual

spiritual Life in you. *Holy Work and carnal Hearts do not agree well together*: 'Tis a plain case.

Quest. 5 *When the Interest of the World and Flesh stands in competition with the Interest of God and the Duty ye owe to him, which of these hath ordinarily the casting Vote with you?* Doth the Will and Authority of God weigh more with you, as to the *ordinary* stated Course of your Lives and Actions, than any other Interests or Inclinations whatsoever? If your *Hearts* be for God, 'tis certain *your Lives* will be so too; for the Issues of Life are from the Heart. *The Tree is known by its Fruit.* Dare ye allow your selves in the wilful or dilatory neglect of known Duty? Dare ye indulge and gratify your Lusts which ye are commanded to crucify? Are ye for taking up only with the *cheap* and *easy* part of Religion, and leaving the more *difficult, self-denying* part behind? Dare ye upon a prospect of worldly Pleasure, Profit or Honour wilfully offend the Divine Majesty? Do ye venture upon that which is forbidden, or do ye not abhor the very thoughts or mention of it? *How shall I do this Wickedness, and sin against God?* Some Persons abstain from Sin for want of a convenient opportunity to commit it, others for fear of Reproach or Punishment: But a gracious Soul is acted by a Principle of sincere Love to God, and Holiness, and therefore *he hateth every false way.* Psal. 119. 104. So verse. 106. *I have sworn and I will perform it, that I will keep thy Righteous Judgments.* Psal. 17 5. *Hold up my Goings in thy Paths, that my Foot steps slip not.*

Your prevailing Habits, and consequently your State, must be known by your Behaviour in a time of trial; then it must appear whether the Interest of God, or your own Corruptions be predominant in you; whether his Commands, or the Inclinations of the Flesh, bear the greater sway with you: That is, whether ye be sincere Christians, or Self-deceiving Hypocrites.

'Tis true indeed, the best of Men, through surprize or the violence of a Temptation, may be overtaken even

even with gross Sin; but if they *fall* into it, they do not *lie* in it, but renew their Repentance, and double their watch: Their *Wills* are *habitually* more against Sin than for it; they endeavour to be rid of it, and therefore are not to be denominated *Workers of Iniquity*. But with the unregenerate the case is otherwise, they love their Sins, and are loth to leave them.

Quest. 6 *Do ye love to be plainly dealt with as to the great Concerns of your Souls?* Are ye for *awakening, convincing, searching Light?* or had he rather *sleep on* and *take your rest?* Are ye earnestly desirous to know your Duty better in order to practice? Have ye no Sin which ye are not willing to find out? Have ye discovered none which ye are not resolved to leave? Do ye take it well to be prudently and faithfully reproved? He that hateth *Reproof is brutish, shall die, suddenly be destroy'd*, and that without Remedy. Faithful are the Wounds of a Friend. *Let the Righteous smite me, it shall be a Kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent Oile*, &c. Psal. 141. 5. It is a woful Sign when Men desire to be soothed up and flattered in their evil ways. And woe be to those who humour them therein, and *daub with untempered Morter*. Ezek. 13. 10. Joh. 3. 19, 20. *This is the Condemnation, that Light is come into the World*, &c. *For every one that doeth Evil hateth the Light, neither cometh to the Light, lest his Deeds should be reproved.* But a gracious Soul is for an *home* and *close* application of the most searching, powerful, convincing Truths, and for judging himself impartially by them. Hypocrites indeed are forward to judge others; they can espy Motes in their Brother's Eye; but O how favourable are they to themselves, how ready to cloak and extenuate their own Sins? 'Tis a sign your Cause is naught, when ye would have it shuffled over without searching.

Quest. 7. *Do ye earnestly desire and endeavour after greater degrees of Holiness both in Heart and Life?* Were

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it put to your choice, whether had ye rather be as *holy* as *Abraham*, *David*, *Daniel*, &c. or any other of the most eminent Saints ye have heard or read of, or as *great* and *successful* in the World as *Cesar*, *Alexander*, *Scipio*, or any the like? *&c.*

This is a plain Question, but 'tis worth your while to put it close to your own Consciences. Sensible things are apt to make very strong Impressions upon us, while spiritual Objects, tho infinitely more excellent, are but coldly or indifferently regarded. If ye be *truly* gracious, ye will certainly desire to be *more* (yea to be *perfectly*) so: And your Desires will be seconded with answerable Endeavours.

As for *inward habitual Holiness*. Ye will still be taking pains with your own Souls, to bring them to a more full conformity to the blessed God: This ye will aim at in all your Religious Exercises, *viz.* That ye may get more Knowledg of God, more intimate Acquaintance and Communion with him through Christ: That your Hearts may be carried out more earnestly, *purely*, and strongly towards him; in short, that ye may be more *inward* with him, and near to him: And that whatever ye find in your selves contrary to him, may be more and more rooted out, mortified, and destroyed: Ye will even *hunger and thirst after Righteousness*, Mat. 5. 6. All the Afflictions ye meet with in the World, will be as nothing to you, if compared with the Burden of remaining Corruption; especially *Averseness from God*.

As for *Holiness of Life*. Ye will lay out your selves for God, your Time, your Strength, your *All* will be at his Service: As accounting that there is nothing else worth living for; but the promoting of his Glory, and the pleasing of his Will. Ye will therefore endeavour to abound in the Work of the Lord: And joyfully embrace Opportunities put into your Hand, to testify your Love by Obedience; tho the Flesh should be a loser or a sufferer by it: Yea you will seek for such opportunities, and contrive with your selves, how

how ye may be most serviceable to the Honour and Interest of your God.

But if as to these Matters ye be cold and careless, ye may well suspect your selves to be false and unsound at the bottom.

Quest. 8. *Do ye heartily love and value all that are truly Godly, as such? Is your delight in the Excellent Ones of the Earth? Do ye love the Society and Converse of such Persons? Are ye heartily concerned for their Welfare? And ready to relieve their Wants and Necessities. How dwelleth the Love of God in that Man who shutteth up his bowels of Compassion from his Brother?* 1 Joh. 3. 17.

The Hearts of wicked Men rise against those who are more strict and serious than themselves. They can hardly afford them a good Word or Look; but put *Nick-Names* upon them, and cou'd wish they were rooted out of the Earth. Others there are, who, tho not so desperately malignant, do yet think that less Care and Strictness might serve the turn, and are offended to see them make so much ado about Religion. But all those who truly love God, love his holy Image wherever they can discern it, love those that are begotten of him, love those that love him, *as such*. So that Love to the People of God, is *principally* and *ultimately* referred unto God himself, who is loved *in them*, and they *for his sake*.

1 Joh. 3. 14. *We know that we have passed from Death into Life, because we love the Brethren.* But then, ye must observe it is not every *lower* degree of Love to the Godly, even as such, that will prove your Sincerity, but it must be such a *prevailing* degree of Love to them, as will argue the predominancy of your Love to God himself, upon whose account they are loved. Take these together, and they will help to prove and illustrate each other. Thus, chap. 5. 2. *By this we know that we love the Children of God, when we love God and keep his Commandments.* So then, love to the Brethren is a more *remote* mark of Sincerity, and must it self be tried by

by this more *immediate one*, viz. Love to God himself.

Queſt. 9. *When may do your Thoughts moſt naturally turn for ſupport in an hour of Trouble? Whence do ye fetch your greateſt Relief at ſuch a time, when ſharp Affliction preſs hard upon you?*

It muſt indeed be acknowledged, that even *Natural Juſt* ſeems to prompt Men to look up towards God when they are under extream Difficulties, and ſome (for Faſhion) will do it ſooner: But in the mean time, the greateſt Supports and Comforts of Ungodly Men are uſually taken from the Creature: They hope the Tide will turn, and Matters go better with them in the World, and this it is that keeps them from ſinking; ſometimes they truſt in their Riches, ſometimes in their Friends, ſometimes to their own Conduct and Management; in ſhort, they will turn their Eyes every way for Satisfaction and Eaſe, rather than towards God.

The Reaſon is plain, they are eſtranged from him, and have not learn'd to take up with him for their only Soul-ſatisfying Portion and Happineſs: They like not the thoughts of this, but ſhun it as a thing unſuitable to them: They will rather weary themſelves with a thouſand fruitleſs Attempts to find reſt in the Creature, than ſeek it in him who alone can give it. Perhaps when they are forced, and even fired out of all other Refuges, they will then come crying to God; but what can ſuch a *conſtrained* ſhew of Devotion ſignify? *Deuntur Deo, ſpectantur creaturis.* They would, as it were, make uſe of God, to ſerve a turn, but their *Hearts*, their *Love* and *Delight* is upon the Creatures.

As for the truly Godly, the Caſe is otherwiſe with them, their Hopes and Comforts are of a more divine Original. Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in thee? *Altho the Fig Tree ſhall not bloſſom, &c. yet will I rejoice in the Lord*, Hab. 3. 17, 18. *Some truſt in Chariots, and*

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some in Horses: But we will remember the Name of the Lord our God, Psal. 20. 7. *There be many that say, who will shew us any good? Lord lift thou up the Light of thy Countenance upon us.* Psal. 4. 6 *In the Multitude of my Thoughts* (*Heb.* troublesome perplexed Thoughts) *within me thy Comforts delight my Soul.*

Thus the Spirit of Adoption teacheth Believers to lay open their Complaints to their Heavenly Father; to cast their Care upon him to place their Happiness in him, to fetch their Comforts from him: And this as Matter of *choice*, not meerly out of *constraint*: *The Name of the Lord is a strong Tower: The Righteous runneth into it and is safe*, Prov. 19. 10. Psal. 94. 22. *The Lord is my Defence, and my God is the Rock of my Refuge.* They know themselves to be Strangers in this World, and therefore expect no great Matters from it. Heaven is their home: Their Treasure, their Hopes, their Joys, their Hearts are there. Of this we have full Proof in the Context, as has been already observed.

By these and such like Questions ye may try your State.

I know there are different degrees of Grace; all that are truly Godly will not be *alike* able to answer what has been proposed: Nor would I make sad the Heart of the weakest sincere Christian. There may be great Failures and Imperfections, but that which I would advise you to, is *strictly* to observe, what is the *prevailing* bent of your Hearts in all this.

But I have one Question more, fit for the strongest to try themselves by; tho the weakest are not unconcerned in it neither.

Quest. 10. *Do ye love God, as God, for himself, above your selves, or any other Object whatsoever?*

That in point of Duty we *ought* thus to love God is past dispute, unless we will renounce at once both *Reason* and *Religion*. Mark. 12. 30. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with ALL thy Heart, and with ALL thy Soul*, &c. *this is the first and the great Commandment.* Mat. 22. 38.

And

And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self. Here 'tis plain that we ought to love God *totally*, without any Limitations or Restrictions, with all our Power, Mind, and Will; with a Love *transcending* either that of our selves, or our Neighbours. I suppose ye will readily grant that God must be loved better than your Neighbours, and yet they must be loved as your selves; therefore God must be loved better than your selves too. Thus the *necessitas præcepti* is plain.

But since there is more in the Precepts of the Divine Law than in the Condition of Salvation; otherwise none could be saved without perfect Obedience: Therefore here ariseth a great Question before us, *viz.* Whether such a Love to God, as God, above our selves, or our own Happiness, *&c.* be so necessary, *necessitate medii*, that no Man is to be accounted in a State of Salvation, who doth not thus love God better than himself?

What I have to say in answer to this, shall be digested into the following Particulars, with submission to better Judgments.

1. 'Tis very odd and dangerous to say, that that Man is in a State of Grace, who loveth not God as God; doth not this sound very absurdly and strangely? We will leave it to the Ear, which, as *Elihu* says, *tries Words*, Job 34. 3.

2. 'Tis clearer by far than the Sun at Noon-day, that God, as God, is infinitely better than our selves, and the whole Creation besides. I would not so much *undervalue* your Judgments as to think, that ye stand in need of having this *proved* to you: Nor would I so far *overvalue* your Piety, as to think that there is no need of *pressing* it upon you, that your Hearts may be suitably affected with it.

3. Therefore we love not God, as God, if we love him not better than our selves, or our own Interest and Happiness, as such: Because, as God, he is infinitely better than we are, or can be. God is the *universal Self originated, independent, unchangeable* GOOD; but the

the goodness of the Creatures is *particular*, *limited*, *derived*, and entirely *dependant* upon him: And therefore by no means to be set in *competition* with him, *Isa.* 40. 25.

4. 'Tis certain that God hath deeply implanted in our Natures a Principle of Self-Love: And that he makes use of it, both in order to our Preservation and Government. This it is which engageth us in the use of Means in order to our own Welfare, and is supposed in all the Precepts, Promises and Threatnings that are set before us. This Principle neither *can*, nor *ought* to be *extirpated*, but it must be *regulated*, and kept within its due Bounds, or in its proper Place, in order to the best and highest Ends.

5. 'Tis also evident that by the Apostacy our Self-Love is become inordinate, perverse, and therefore exceeding sinful: So that Self-denial is one of the first steps towards our Recovery, *Mat.* 16. 24.

We are fallen from God to our selves, and are for setting up our own little, carnal, supported Self-Interest, in opposition to that full and proper Interest that he has in us: that is, we would be Gods to our selves; this is the grand fundamental disorder of human Nature, the Heart of the Old Man. This has disjointed us, and rendred us offensive to God, and uneasy to our selves, and to all about us, till we be reduced and set right again.

So then this sensual corrupt Self-Love must be mortified; but lawful and just Self-Love must be improved, as was said before.

6. In assigning the Notion of our chief or ultimate End, God's Glory and our own Salvation must not be separated: For our intention must take in both; but then the latter must be considered as in full Subordination to the former. We may and ought to desire our own Eternal Happiness, that God may be glorified therein, who is well pleased and delighted in the Welfare and Perfection of his holy ones. Our supreme

End must fall in with *his*, who made all things for himself, that he alone may have the Glory.

7. Therefore to love God only or chiefly for our selves, as a means to our own Happiness, is greatly to affront and dishonour him, by preferring our selves before him, the Creature before the Creator, the silly Interest of a crawling Worm, before the glorious *all-comprehending* Interest of the supreme infinite Majesty. 'Tis to invert the order of things, while we make our selves the end, and consider him but as a means in order thereto: As if we were better, or more amiable than he; or our Happiness more valuable than his Glory. Such Profaneness is not to be endured, but abhorred. Know ye not that the whole Creation has no worth in it but what is derived from God, and to be measured by its Relation to him.

8. To love God with a pure, raised, transcendent, superlative Love for himself, as the most amiable and perfect Good, *from*, *by*, and *to* whom we and all things else are: And then to love our selves and all other Objects for him, as the supreme ultimate End of all; this is the true Method of holy Love, towards greater Measures whereof the best of us should be ever aspiring. Is it not highly reasonable that he who is best should be most loved? That he who is the Author of our Beings should be our End? That we should aim at and intend him in all; in a word that the love of our selves should be subjected to the highest and purest Love of God? Urge these things upon your selves, take pains with your own Hearts to bring them to such a Frame; plead the Cause of God with your Souls, till the Fire kindle, and ye be carried up above Self, to Him, and all by the help of the Holy Spirit.

'Tis true indeed, he needs not you, nor your Love, *neither can ye be profitable to him thereby*, Job 22. 2, 3. *Your Goodness extendeth not to him.* Psal. 16. 2. The advantage is like to be your own, and should not the Glory be his? As carnal inordinate *self-seeking* is no better than *self-destroying*: So, to go out of our selves, and to

to be as it were estranged from, and lost to our selves, that we may seek God, live in him and enjoy Communion with him; this I say is the true way to advance our own Interest, while we seem to overlook it; because by this Means we shall find our selves, and our All in God with infinite advantage. How much some of the People of God have been carried out in holy Zeal for his Honour, above their own particular Self-Interest, ye may see *Exod.* 32. 32. *Numb.* 14. 12. *Rom.* 9. 3. Which places I must not now stay to enlarge upon.

9 But here it must be remembred, that God being immaterial and invisible, is not an Object of Sense, nor *directly* of sensitive passionate Love. Therefore the Heart may be *inwardly, deeply, predominantly*, and therefore *sincerely* for God, tho as to the *passionate* part, we may find our selves more sensibly carried out towards other Objects. Because the nearness and sensibleness of the Creature promoteth such sensible workings in the lower sensitive Faculties, and corporeal Spirits. As for example:

A sincere Christian may be more *feelingly* affected towards a dear Friend or Relation, or some other Creature-enjoyment, than towards God himself; yet doth it not therefore follow that his Heart is more for these things than for God, because were he put to trial, he would forsake all these Enjoyments, rather than forsake God or quit his Interest in him, whereby it appears that his Mind and Will are more for God, tho the lower sensitive Appetite work most *feelingly* toward sensible Objects.

10 Therefore tho it be essential to Holiness to love God for himself, as our absolutely ultimate End, and therefore better than our selves; yet there may be some secret conception or beginning of this Love in a Soul long before the Person in whom it is perceives it. Because we are apt to judg of our selves by what appears most sensibly in us, and to overlook what lies more deep and inward. Now, as was said before, love to self, and to the Creatures, operates in a more sensible,

passionate feeling manner, than holy intellectual Love doth. Because God, being a Spirit, is not so near to our Senses and Passions as the Creature is.

Therefore, because I would not *make sad the Hearts of any whom God would not have made sad*, Ezek. 13. 22. nor give an advantage to Satan, to disquiet the Soul of the weakest sincere Christian: Let me say to such, as follows;

Supposing that ye are satisfied that God, as God, is infinitely more amiable than your selves, and that he is your *absolutely supreme, chief* or *ultimate* End; and therefore that ye ought to love him, as such, above your selves.

Again, if ye do earnestly desire that Happiness which consists in so loving him above any other Happiness whatsoever: Tho in the mean time ye dare not say that ye love God for himself, above your selves; but are, it may be, more sensibly and feelingly concerned for your own Welfare, that ye may escape the Wrath to come, than for his Glory. Yet ye bewail this, and desire an Heart to love God more for himself: And to refer your own Interest and all to him.

Why, if the Case be thus with you, I would not have ye be discouraged, or cast down: For it seems to me, that ye have the *seeds* and *beginnings* of this holy Love to God for himself, whereof we have been speaking: And our Lord will not *break the bruised Reed*, nor *quench the smoking Flax*.

Let me therefore earnestly beseech you to pray hard for further Influences of the Spirit of Love; and take pains with your own Hearts to raise them more above self unto God, that your Spark may become a Flame, and that ye may be even swallowed up of holy Love: So will ye find that Comfort, Peace, and Assurance which ye are so pensively seeking and enquiring after. O learn at length to pore *less* upon your own poor, dark, drooping Souls, and look *more* at him who is LIGHT, and in whom there is no Darkness at all.

All

As for the common ſort of the ignorant Pretenders to the Love of God and Holineſs, all this will ſeem to them more ado than needs. Nor is it difficult to confound their Pretences without going thus high.

To theſe I would ſay: If (as ye profeſs) ye truly love God, whence is that ye think no more of him? And that ye ſpeak no more of him? And delight no more in converſe with him? Are no more concerned when he is diſhonoured? Nor grieved for your own Sins, and the Sins of others againſt him? How comes it to paſs that ſo many Religious Duties are wholly neglected by you? And others ſo miſerably trifled in, and ſlubber'd over? Whence is it that your Luſts are ſo much indulged, and that ye keep in league with his Enemies, *&c.*? Is this the Love ye ſpeak of? It might well become you to know your ſelves better.

Thus much for the Uſe of Examination.

CHAP. XI.

The Exhortation in ſeveral Branches.

1. *To thoſe who are not yet wrought for Heaven, directing them what Methods to take in order to their Converſion.*

IT may juſtly be expected that the Iſſue of the fore-going Examination will be *various*, according to the different State or Circumſtances of the Perſons who ſhall think it worth their while to concern themſelves *ſeriouſly* therein.

1. Tis not uncharitable to ſuppoſe, that ſome may find great reaſon to conclude thus: this renewing

Change has not yet paſſed upon them; a *ſad* Concluſion, God knows, but neceſſary to be made where 'tis *true*. O happy Congregation indeed, if this were an unreaſonable Suppoſition! happy, I ſay, if all among you were thus wrought for Heaven!

2. 'Tis likely there may be others not altogether without hopes, that this great Change is wrought upon them, nor yet without Fears of the contrary, but full of Doubts and Heſitations about it.

3. And ſurely there are ſome among you, who, through Grace, are able *comfortably* to conclude, that they are indeed paſſed from Death to Life; whoſe Hopes do quite overtop their Fears in this Matter.

Now that which I would endeavour, through God's Aſſiſtance, is, to ſpeak a word in ſeaſon to all theſe in order.

To the firſt ſort, with deep concern for them, trembling over them, travelling in Birth with them till Chriſt be formed in them. Help Lord!

To the ſecond, with a due Mixture of Tenderneſs and Judgment, Compaſſion and Diſcretion.

To the third, with humble Thankfulneſs and an Heart enlarged in Love to God and our Redeemer, that our Joy may be full.

All this, I ſay, I *would* do, but of my ſelf *can* do nothing. O for more Faith in the bleſſed Spirit of our glorified Head.

And now I proceed to the Exhortation.

1. To thoſe who are yet in an unregenerate State.

Come, come, beſtir your ſelves; what have ye been doing all this while? what are ye dreaming of? It is high time to awake out of ſleep, and to haſten your eſcape from the Wrath to come, while there is yet Hope. Little know ye but your Glaſs may be almoſt run, and yet alas your great Work is undone. Let me ſay to you, as Gen. 19. 17. *Eſcape for your Lives, look not behind you, leſt ye be conſumed.*

If therefore, ye would be converted and ſaved, let me alſo preſs upon you the following Directions.

O Lord my God, I beſeech thee, ſend me good ſpeed this day; and grant that the ſtrong holds of Satan may be broken; and the Intereſt of thy Son, my Lord, be advanced, and that the Kingdom of Glory may be haſtened: Lord remember the Requeſts (tho too *few*, and *cold*) that have been put up to Heaven both in publick and in ſecret on this behalf, and give a gracious Anſwer. Even ſo. *Amen.*

Direct. 1. Set your ſelves in good earneſt to the ſerious Conſideration of your Spiritual Concerns. Exerciſe your moſt ſober deliberate Thoughts about them. Ye will find one Day that it would have been better for you not to have *had* Reaſon, than not to *uſe* it about the Intereſts of your Souls. Better I ſay that ye had filled up the room of the meaneſt Gnat, Worm, or Mole in the Creation, than of Men, if ye do not improve and uſe your nobleſt Faculties to their proper Ends. Ye can *think* naturally and eaſily, early and late, with much earneſtneſs and conſtancy about other Matters, how to buy and ſell, and get Gain, and other ſuch important Trifles, (pardon the Contradiction for 'tis of your own making.) But let me ask you, have ye no thoughts to ſpare about your Eternal Concerns, where ye muſt dwell for ever, what ſhall become of your immortal Souls, when they muſt abide in Fleſh no longer? Do not theſe things deſerve to be thought of? What do ye think your Reaſon was given you for? Can ye expect to be ſanctified and ſaved without any Endeavours of your own in order thereto? Or is it likely your Endeavours ſhould be to any purpoſe, unleſs your Minds be firſt awakened, to proceed rationally in the Matter? To ask your ſelves what ye are? Whence ye came? Where ye are placed? Whither ye are going? What ye have to do? Try to anſwer theſe things to your ſelves. I muſt not ſtay to enlarge upon them: Do not expect to become Religious by *chance*, it muſt be by *choice* (through Grace) or not at all. And is it likely that the Will ſhould act blindly

in the Case, or chuse the Ways of God, before the Understanding be convinced of the Worth and Excellency of them? And what Conviction without Consideration?

I thought I had told you before, that God works upon Men as rational Creatures, upon the Will by the Mediation of the Understanding: But 'tis the design of Satan to keep you asleep in carnal Security, to find your Thoughts *other* employment, that he may divert you from considering these things, for which your Reason was *principally* given you: And are ye willing thus to be led blindfold to Hell? (Lord, open their Eyes that they may see): O think how ye will ever be able to answer it to God or your own Consciences, that ye have been so stupidly inconsiderate, as to the things of your everlasting Peace? All Wickedness may be resolved into Inconsiderateness. *Isa.* 1. 3, 4. *My People doth not consider.* Ah sinful Nation! a People laden with Iniquity.

Well then, Sirs, if ye think your Souls worth so much Labour, I would offer to you some Particulars to be considered in the following order.

1. Consider well how sinful and miserable an unregenerate State is.

As for the sinfulness of it. It is a State of Hostility against Heaven. In Scripture account all unregenerate Men are Enemies to God, yea Enmity it self. *Rom.* 8. 7. *Col.* 1. 21. They are said to contemn him, despise him, and to cast him behind their back: They kick against him, they hate and abhor him, *Zech.* 11. 8. *My Soul loathed them, and their Soul also abhorred me.* Is not this, think you, a sinful State indeed? And is it not in some respect so much the worse, in that they profess or pretend to the contrary? With their Mouth they shew much Love: but in reality, they do alienate themselves from him who has the most full and absolute propriety in them. They rebel against their most Righteous Governour; and ungratefully abuse the Riches of his Mercy and Goodness.

They

They tread under-foot the Son of God, and will not that he ſhould reign over them, and therefore are juſtly accounted Enemies; and muſt expect to be treated accordingly, *Luk.* 19. 27. *But thoſe mine Enemies which would not that I ſhould reign over them, bring hither, and ſlay them before me. They do deſpite unto the Spirit of Grace,* Heb. 10. 29. And in all this they preſidiouſly break their baptiſmal Covenant, wherein they were ſolemnly devoted to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt. And withal they wilfully deſtroy themſelves, and wrong their own Souls. But that brings me to the other Conſideration.

An unregenerate State is a miſerable State. How ſhould it be otherwiſe? Can a Man harden himſelf againſt God and proſper? No, no: Such Perſons are under the Wrath and Indignation of the Almighty, an Abomination to him; he is of purer Eyes than to behold them. His holy Law is armed with moſt dreadful Curſes, and Threatnings againſt them. *God ſhall wound the Head of his Enemies; and the hairy Scalp of ſuch a one as goeth on ſtill in his Treſpaſſes,* Pſal. 68. 21. They are Slaves of Satan, led Captive by him at his Will, who employs them *in treaſuring up unto themſelves Wrath againſt the Day of Wrath:* Even the Offers of Goſpel-Grace which are daily made to them, as they aggravate their Sin, will alſo make their Condemnation heavier. Thus that which was deſigned for their Good, becomes the *ſavour of Death unto Death unto them.* What ſhall I ſay? They are Heirs of Hell, condemned already in Point of Law; tho Judgment has not yet paſſed the final Sentence: They are not ſure of being ſpared an hour longer. One would think this ſhould make them ill at eaſe, till the Affairs of their Souls be in a better poſture.

'Tis wonderful to think what ſhift they make to avoid the Anticipations of Hell in their own Breaſts. Put all this together, and then tell me whether it be not a miſerable State. Pſal. 50. 22. *Now conſider this, ye that forget God, leſt I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.*

2. Think

2. Think next what great things God himself has done in order to your deliverance from this sinful, miserable State: Tho your Transgressions be many and heinous, he has provided a Ransom for you, the Blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all Sin. Tho your Natures be exceedingly corrupted, his Holy Spirit is nigh and ready to help and heal you, if ye do not wilfully resist and grieve him. Prov. 1. 23 *Turn ye at my Reproof: behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you.* Tho your spiritual Enemies be strong, subtil, and malignant, they cannot destroy you, unless ye obstinately side with them. The Standing Office of the Ministry is appointed to treat with you in order to your Reconciliation and Peace with God, 2 Cor. 5. 20. Notwithstanding all the Affronts ye have done to the Divine Patience, God still waits to be gracious to you: Tho ye little deserve to be thus treated, 'tis yet put to your choice that ye may be happy if ye will be holy. A Throne of Grace is erected for your encouragement: God hath sworn by himself that he delights not in your Ruin and Destruction, but rather that ye should repent and live: He condescends in a way of Mercy and Forgiveness to reason the Case with you: *Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die? Cease to do evil, learn to do well. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: tho your Sins be as Scarlet, they shall be as white as Snow; tho they be red like Crimson, they shall be as Wool.* Is. 1. 16, 17, 18. In a word, Matters are brought so far in order to your Recovery, that nothing but your own Wilfulness and final Impenitency can be your ruin.

3. And now consider what it is that God expects from you in compliance with the Methods of his Grace, *viz.* That from a deep sense of your past Folly, and a believing Apprehension of his Mercy and Goodness in Christ, ye do sincerely turn unto him through this great Mediator, and then all's your own. Are not these Terms highly reasonable? Are they not full of rich Grace and Benignity? Can ye imagin that Divine Mercy should stoop lower? Would ye be saved

from Wrath, while ye resolve to persist in your Enmity against God? What then would become of his Holiness and Purity, of his Truth, his Government, his inflexible Justice and Righteousness? Would ye have an Interest in Christ while ye wilfully reject him? Would ye be saved by his Blood, without being sanctified by his Spirit, and governed by his Law? Or would ye have the Graces and Comforts of the Holy-Ghost while ye are still quenching and resisting his Influences? In short, can ye tell what ye would have? Think well of it, and ye will find either that your Desires are utterly immodest and unreasonable, or else that he is ready to grant them.

4. Consider also how many Millions are got safe to Heaven, who were once at as great a distance from it as you. The Saints now in Glory were by nature Children of Wrath as well as others, besides the Guilt of many actual Transgressions: How long did many of them stand it out against the Calls of Divine Grace as ye have done? but at last they yielded, and so escaped. Methinks this Consideration should animate and encourage you, yea and even enflame you with a generous Ambition of attaining the same Happiness. Have so many poor Sinners found Mercy! why then stand ye looking one upon another, as if ye could not find your hands? Are ye content to pine away in your Iniquities? O! up and be doing, and the Lord in great Mercy be with you.

5. Consider how little the World or Flesh signify to counter-ballance the ruin of your immortal Souls. *What would it profit a Man if he should gain the whole World?* &c. Ye are grosly ignorant of the nature and capacities of your own Souls, if ye think that terrene or sensual Delights and Enjoyments will satisfy them. *Isa.* 55. 2, *&c.* What tho the Flesh should be abundantly provided for, and fair deliciously every day, ye will still find something within you that is not filled: And so *in the fulness of your sufficiency ye will be in straits,* Job 20. 22. And besides Creature-enjoyments are *uncertain*

certain as well as *insufficient*: They *may* be taken from you, ye *must* be taken from them. Will it be any Relief to your miserable Souls in *another* World to remember the fleshly Prosperity and Ease ye had in this? Will your Possessions, Sport, and Jollity follow you into Eternity? Or will not the remembrance of them rather cut you to the very Heart? When being doomed to everlasting disconsolate Darkness, ye shall not be able to forget how foolishly ye destroy'd your selves for meer Trifles.

O consider this, and do not hazzard your Souls for a thing of nought.

How fast are ye posting continually towards Eternity! Your continuance on Earth is like to be but short at longest: And by reason of its uncertainty may prove much shorter than ye are willing to imagine or hear of. Do ye not see others daily dropping into the Grave before your Eyes, even such as were as likely for Life as your selves? And how little do ye know how soon your turn may come! and what if your Glass should be run before your Work be done? what are ye then? It may be when the Fears of Death and Judgment are upon you, ye will then cry out for more time: But how little reason have ye to expect that such Cries should be regarded, from Persons who have trifled away so much time already to no purpose? *Labour so to number your Days as to apply your Hearts to Wisdom.*

6. Consider how *easy the Yoke of Christ is, how light his Burden.* Mat. 11. 30. I know indeed that the Heart of unregenerate Men are deeply prejudiced against the ways of serious Godliness; partly through their own Corruption, and partly through the Malice and Subtilty of the Devil: And therefore such Prejudices must needs be most unworthy and unreasonable. How should there be any Reason or Truth against the God of Truth and Reason? *His Service is perfect Freedom; his Commandments are not grievous.* Here let me reason the Case a little with you; bring forth your strong Argu-

ments

Arguments. What is there that offends you in the holy Ways of God? Do ye fear they will tend to your loss or disadvantage in the World? Why, are ye yet to learn that *a Man's Life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth?* Luk. 12.15. Our heavenly Father knows how far we have need of these things, and is able to furnish a Table in the Wilderness. If we trust him not with our Souls, we are undone; but if we do, is it not very absurd to distrust him as to our outward Concerns? What a preposterous kind of Sollicitude is this! If I have told ye earthly Things and ye believe not; how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly Things? *Joh.* 1.12. I only allude to it.

Nor are there wanting promises to rest upon this Matter. *Seek first the Kingdom of God, —— and all these things shall be added,* Mat. 6.33. 1 Tim. 4.8. *Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the Life that now is,* &c. Psal. 37.3. *Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the Land, and verily thou shalt be fed.* Besides the promise of *an Hundred Fold* to those who forsake their worldly Enjoyments *for his Name's sake,* Mat. 19.29.

Do ye apprehend that it will tend to your dishonour to engage strictly in the holy Ways of God? *Answ.* 'Tis a very small matter to be judged of Mans Judgment. *Those that honour God, he will honour: But they that despise him, shall be lightly esteemed.*

Do ye think that a Life of Holiness is irksome or unpleasant? *Answ.* If ye consider the Duties enjoyned, the Promises annexed, the Supports and Assistances vouchsafed to the Godly, the Experience and Testimonies of those who have tried the Pleasures of both Kinds, yea or the true Notion of Pleasure it self; you will find abundant reason to conclude that there are no Joys comparable to those of the Godly: But that Wisdom excelleth Folly as much as Light doth Darkness. *The ways of Holiness are ways of Pleasantness,* Prov. 3.17.

Thus

Thus ye must by serious Consideration endeavour to dispossess those Prejudices which are rooted in the Hearts of unregenerate Men against Religion: There is enough to be said to shew how vain and frivolous their Objections are. Therefore let your Reason be fully satisfied in the case; do not stand in your own Light, plead not for your Disease, nor argue in the Dark against things which ye know not: First try, and then judg: It is not cavilling against your Duty which will serve to excuse you from it.

7. Consider what great encouragement ye have humbly to expect the assistance of special Grace, if ye carefully improve the Abilities and Helps that are already granted you. It's likely that Satan and your own corrupt Hearts may suggest to you, that it is to no purpose to trouble your Thoughts about these things, because special Grace is the Gift of God, *who doth with his own as he pleaseth.* But to this I answer; Tho 'tis true that Grace is a free Gift, else it were not Grace: Yet it doth not therefore follow that ye must sit still in a sluggish Stupidity, and expect to be saved without any care or concern of your own about it. Are not the Mercies of common Providence, as Food, Raiment, Friends, Health, *&c.* the Gifts of God? Will ye therefore argue that no care is to be taken about these things? How then comes it to pass that your Thoughts and Endeavours are employed daily and late in the World, and for it? It seems ye are most willing to be imposed upon, and to have a Cloak for your Sloth in Spiritual Matters; tho ye would laugh at him who should argue at the same rate as to temporal Concerns.

Therefore, to be plain with you, I must tell you ye have no reason to expect the help of special Grace, while through meer Sloth and Perverseness ye will not excite your natural Faculties, nor strike in with Convictions and other Helps of common Grace which are vouchsafed you. But rather ye may justly fear, lest ye should be given up to a reprobate Sense, to blind-

Indness of Mind, and hardness of Heart. *For the turning away of the Simple shall slay them,* Prov. 1. 32.

But on the other Hand; ye are not destitute of Encouragement, if in good earnest ye fall to the work: It may be ye will say that ye have no full proper Promise to depend upon for special Grace, tho ye should improve the common Helps that are given you. But here let me ask you, Are there not many dreadful Threatnings to the sloathful Neglectors of this great Salvation? Are ye not earnestly invited to come in, and accept of Christ? Is not the God with whom ye have to do merciful and gracious? Is not the great Redeemer full of Compassions? Are ye not commanded *to seek the Lord while he may be found, and to call upon him while he is near?* Isa. 55 6, 7. And is there not a great deal of Encouragement in all this? Has God set you about needless unprofitable Work? Will he not be found of them that seek him? Doth not he love Holiness better than ye? And will he not be as ready to vouchsafe the sanctifying Influences of his Grace, as you are truly to desire and labour after them? What Iniquity have ye found in him, that ye should entertain such mean, low, narrow thoughts of his Goodness? Where is the Man, and what is his Name that can say, Lord, I did to my utmost improve the helps thou gavest me, and yet thou refusedst to give me more? Is not the case quite contrary? *I have called, and ye have refused; I have stretched out my Hand, and no Man regarded* &c. Prov. 1. 24. What got the sloathful Servant by saying, *I knew thee, that thou art an hard Man?* Mat. 25, 24. Did this excuse him for hiding his Lord's Money (tho but one Talent) in the Earth?

Let me make the Matter yet plainer by a familiar Comparison.

Suppose some great Prince or Nobleman, famous for Bounty and Kindness to the distressed, who beholding a forlorn helpless Creature, miserable, wretched, poor, and blind, and naked, and taking compassion on

on him should say to him, Friend, come to my Door, have fully supplied the Wants of many whose Circumstances were as bad as thine, and I delight so to do. Now tho in all this here be not a full direct Promise made to this poor Wretch, yet would ye not take him for a mad Man who should make light of such an Intimation and Encouragement? Poor Sinner! thou art the Man, so the Case stands between Christ and thee: And because thou art blind, he appoints his Servants to lead thee to him; and this is the Errand upon which I am come this day: do not say but that help was offered thee.

8. Consider how little all that ever ye have done in Matters of Religion will avail you if ye go not through with the Work. If ye be but almost perswaded to be Christians, ye will be but almost sayed. It may be ye expect great Matters from your frequent customary Attendance upon Gospel-Ordinances, and your making a more strict Profession of Religion than many others do: But O remember, *The Kingdom of God is not in Word, but in Power*, 1 Cor. 4. 20. *Many will say in the great Day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy Name? and in thy Name have cast out Devils?* Mat. 7. 22. which are greater things than ye can pretend to: Yet *will he profess unto them, I never knew you: Depart from me ye that work Iniquity*, Vers. 23. The foolish Virgins had Lamps of Profession, *Mat.* 25. but perished for want of Oil, *viz.* true Grace. In short, all that ever ye have done in the Service of God will prove but lost labour, as to any saving Benefit, except your Hearts be effectually wrought upon and turned to God, as has been fully opened and proved already.

O consider this well; have ye done, and some of you *suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain*, Gal 3. 4. Yea, hath *so much labour been bestowed upon you in vain?* Chap. 4. 11. So much Grace received *in vain*, 2 Cor. 6. 1. O how bitter will the remembrance of these things be one Day! How will it pierce you to the very Heart to think, alas! is all my Profession, Prayers, Hearing, &c. come to this! Namely the Hypocrites Reward

ward! It had been well for me that I had never known the way of Righteousness, rather than to have rested thus in an outward shew of Religion. Alas! that I should be brought so nigh the Kingdom of God, and yet fall short forever of it!

9. Consider how long the Divine Patience hath born with you already. Where had ye been before this Day, but that ye have had to do with a God who is *merciful*, and *gracious*, and *long-suffering*. How easily could he long since have taken your guilty Souls out of your Bodies, and sent them into a place where the Evil of Sin, and Danger of delaying Repentance are better known? How have ye despised *the Riches of his Goodness, and Forbearance, and Long-suffering!* Even *that Goodness which leads you to Repentance*, Rom. 2. 4.

How many Instances have ye had of the Divine Benignity and Compassion towards you? And yet how little Effect has all had upon you! *Line upon Line, Precept upon Precept, here a little and there a little*; and yet all has not prevailed with you to repent and turn to God. Are ye not ashamed! do ye not blush to think of your vile Ingratitude and Disingenuity towards him? Do ye not tremble to consider what the Consequence of such Obstinacy is like to be? Do ye imagin that the Spirit of God will always strive with the wilful Despisers of his Grace? O remember, *lento gradu ad vindictam procedit ita divina, &c.* Divine Wrath proceeds slowly to Vengeance, but will compensate that slowness with the weight of it when it comes. *Læsa patientia fit furor.*

As the Gospel-Dispensation is most spiritual, so spiritual Judgments are more common to those who trifle under it, than, perhaps, most Men consider. But I proceed:

Direct. 2. Follow on these Considerations, till suitable *Convictions* arise from them, and your Hearts be sensibly affected with them. Think not that some general slighty superficial Thoughts about these things will serve the turn: No, no; they are Matters of greater

consequence than so, they nearly concern you, and therefore must be *laid to Heart*. Urge them home upon your own Spirits, apply them close; they have a Work to do not only upon your *Understandings*, but upon your Wills, Hearts, and Affections. It is not enough that ye acknowledg these things to be *true*, but ye must press the Matter further; if they be Truths they are weighty Truths indeed: O labour to feel the weight of them, that they may go to the quick; apply them strictly and warmly to your own Souls. "It is (says one) a great part of a Christian's Skill and "Duty, to be a good Preacher to himself: There is "more in this than most Christians are aware of, or "use to practise; this is a lawful and a gainful way of "Preaching. No Body here can make question of thy "Call, nor deny thee a Licence, nor silence thee, if thou "silence not thy self. Imitate the most powerful Preacher, and plead with thy own Soul as he is wont to "do with his Hearers. [*Mr. Baxter.*]

Tho such Considerations may wound, pierce, or gall you for the present, 'tis so much the better; ye must be wounded that ye may be healed; ye must be broken that ye may be bound up: The truth is ye have wounded your selves already, and so much the worse, by how much ye are less sensible of it; your putrified Ulcers must be search'd to the bottom if ever ye expect a thorow Cure: Your sluggish Hearts must be awakened to purpose; ye have slept too long. O labour to be deeply convinced of your past folly, till ye groan under the weight of that Guilt which ye have contracted; Remember ye are ruined to all Intents and Purposes if your Guilt be not removed; and therefore your present Case is not to be rested in.

There is yet hope for you, but no time to trifle in. Therefore,

Direct. 3. 'Tis highly necessary that ye now come to some befitting *Resolution* in the case. In general, that ye resolve to do your utmost to put your spiritual

Concerns

Concerns into a better posture: And that henceforth ye will strive earnestly to *enter in at the strait Gate*: And neglect no Means nor Helps in order thereto: Such Resolutions as these are most proper in your condition: But if your Hearts still hang back, let me ask ye, what will ye resolve upon? *Vita humana sua proposito magis alit & languida.*

Will ye put the Matter to the venture, and trouble your Heads no further about it, but still go on at the old, dull, stupid rate?

If so, this is wilfully to destroy your own Souls; and whom can ye blame but your selves?

Will ye sit down in Despair? This is to despise or undervalue the Riches of Gospel-Grace that are set before you. *Those that come to Christ, he will in no wise cast out.*

Again, will ye delay for a while, and put off the thoughts of these things till hereafter? *Answ.* This indeed is the common Case, but almost as unreasonable as either of the other two.

Your times are not in your own Hands, ye know not how soon your Souls may be required of you; the longer ye delay, the more difficult it is like to be; and the Spirit that should help you, will be grieved by your backwardness: Satan will have the faster hold of you; and if Death overtake you before the work be done, ye are damned.

Therefore, I say, turn your Thoughts which way you will, all other Resolutions will be found mad and dangerous, except that of the Prodigal; *I will arise and go to my Father*: So do ye. And here let me tell you 'tis needful that your Resolutions be *firm* and *steady*, lest those Difficulties which may afterwards arise in your way should discourage you; and that they be *speedy*, lest Death overtake you unprepared. And also that in this whole business ye be sensible of your own Weakness and Insufficiency, lest ye miscarry through foolish Self-Confidence. But of that more by and by.

Direct. 4. See that your Resolutions be forthwith put into *practice*. By this it shall appear that *they* are true and hearty; if the Will be determined in the case, future Endeavours will ensue.

And here your work lies in the following Order.

1. Humble your selves deeply in the Presence of God for all that Sin and Folly which hitherto ye have been guilty of. Consider the Evil of Sin as it is contrary to the holy and pure Nature and Law of God. Call to remembrance your own Sins, and lay them to Heart, that they may not be laid to your Charge. In a particular manner bewail the Corruption of your Natures; and more especially *the estrangedness of your Hearts from God, and Enmity against him, with that inordinate propension to the Creature*, in which the Heart of the Old Man doth mainly consist.

Proceed then to consider those actual Transgressions which have all along issued from this Corruption, viz. Your loss of precious Time, misimprovement of Gospel-Ordinances and Means of Grace; your Pride, Passion, Earthlyness, Sensuality, &c. Confess these things humbly and feelingly in the Presence of God. Labour to melt into an ingenuous Child-like Sorrow, for having carried it so unworthily to so good and gracious a Father.

That Sorrow for Sin which proceeds only from fear of Punishment, is the Sorrow of a Slave, and may consist with as much Love to Sin as ever: But Godly Sorrow is animated by holy Love to God, which raiseth in the Soul a rational hearty Grief for its Transgressions against him, an hatred of Sin, and Resolution against it for the future. This is *Repentance from dead Works, and toward God.*

He that covereth his Sins, shall not prosper; but he that confesseth and forsaketh them, shall find Mercy. Prov. 28. 13. Yea, as Matters now stand (such is the wonderful condescension of the Law of Grace) 'tis an Act of Justice and Faithfulness, as well as Mercy to forgive

Sin

Sin wherefoever with true Repentance it is confeſſed. 1 Joh. 1. 9. *If we confeſs our Sins, he is faithful and juſt to forgive us our Sins*, &c.

Therefore, I ſay, give Glory to God, by an humble acknowledgment of your Sins. Lay your ſelves low, that his Glory may be advanced: Put your Mouths in the Duſt, if ſo be there may be hope. Juſtify his holy Law, tho in ſo doing ye condemn your ſelves. Say with the returning Prodigal, Luk. 15. 21. *Father, I have ſinned againſt Heaven, and in thy ſight, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son*, &c.

2. Thankfully acknowledg the Riches of Free-Grace, in that God is *yet* pleaſed to offer you Terms of Reconciliation and Peace. The Golden Scepter is held forth to you that ye may touch it and live. Methinks this ſhould encourage you, and put Life and Vigour into your Proceedings, and draw out your very Souls in ſweet Returns of Love to God. Lord, is there yet Hope, is there any Mercy for ſuch an one as I? Behold I come in Obedience to thy Call. *Bleſſed be God for Jeſus Chriſt.*

3. Humbly implore pardoning Mercy for your paſt Sins, and the help of Divine Grace for your preſent and future Duty. As the neceſſity of your Caſe ſhould make you very earneſt and importunate in theſe Requeſts: So ye have great encouragement given you to ſtrengthen your Faith and Confidence in the Divine Goodneſs. *God delights in Mercy, and hath proclaimed his gracious Name*, Exod. 34. 6, 7. Uſe this as an Argument in Prayer, as the Pſalmiſt did, Pſal. 25. 11. *For thy Names ſake, O Lord, pardon mine Iniquity, for it is great.* Plead the Merits and Satisfaction of Jeſus Chriſt, the Promiſes of the Goſpel, and aſſure your ſelves God is as ready to forgive, as ye are to repent and forſake your Sins. *He will not deſpiſe a broken and a contrite Heart*, Pſal. 51. 17.

And ſince the work that lies before you is holy and ſpiritual, therefore truſt not to your own Reſolutions or Strength: Pray hard for the help of the Spirit: Lay

your Souls open to the Influences of his Grace; yield your selves to his Conduct. Carefully strike in with all his Motions. *Lord, here am I, what wouldst thou have me to do? Teach me the way wherein I should go, incline mine Heart to thy Testimonies, strengthen me with Might in my inward Man. Magnify thy Power in my Weakness. Speak, Lord, for thy Servant heareth, draw me, and I will run after thee.*

4. And now give up your selves unfeignedly to God in and through Christ. If ye expect he should be your God, that is, your Portion, Happiness, Soul-satisfying Good, ye must be his People, devoted to his Love and Service: The Covenant must be mutual, else how should it be a Covenant. Let this be done with great Freedom, Chearfulness and Resolution of Spirit, ye will never have reason to repent of your choice. *He will be your Shield, and your exceeding great Reward.*

5. Live henceforth as becomes the Covenant-People of God. Renounce your Lusts and Corruptions: Let the time past of your Lives suffice you to have fulfilled the Inclinations of the Flesh. Remember ye must now live at another rate than heretofore ye have done. The Glory of God must be your great End; his holy Word your Rule; his blessed Spirit your Leader and Guide; His Promises your Support and Joy. In short, *ye must become a peculiar People, zealous of good Works:* Still endeavouring to make further advances in the Knowledg and Love of God, and in Obedience to him.

Direct. 3. Arm your selves, and watch carefully against those Temptations to which young Converts are in an especial manner liable.

Under this Head I must only give you some short Hints, for to speak fully to this Point, would require a very large Discourse. At first setting out ye enter upon a State of Warfare, and if ye stand not upon your Guard, Satan will be sure to get an advantage against you.

1. Some

[illegible] Some Persons at their first Conversion meet with extraordinary Raptures of Spiritual Joy, full Assurances of the Love of God, and lively Foretasts of the Heavenly Glory. Their reconciled Father smiles upon them, takes them into his Arms and comforteth them, *as one whom his Mother comforteth; and dandleth upon her Knees*, as the Prophet speaks, *Isa.* 66. 12, 13.

And now Satan takes an advantage to make them impatient of staying upon Earth any longer; they would needs be removed to Heaven out of hand, and are scarce content to wait God's time. This case, tho not very common, is yet more than a meer Supposition. To such I would say,

Ye have great reason indeed to be very thankful that Matters are so well with you in reference to your eternal State. But O remember how long God waited to be gracious to you; how frequent were the strivings of his Spirit with you before ye would yield! How well contented could ye have been to have continued on Earth for ever, before he gave you these feeling Discoveries of a better State! And how justly might he have left you to perish in your Aversion from him!

But now ye think your own turn is served, and your eternal Welfare secured, ye would quit the Stage, and do no more Service for God, or his Church, in your Generation, but have your full Blessedness immediately, as if it were of Debt and not of Grace. Is this your Kindness to your Friend, your Ingenuity, your Gratitude? Is not the Reward sure? Shall it not come in season? Will not Heaven be the more welcome after ye have duly waited till ye be at age for that Inheritance? Is there nothing of Unbelief in this your eagerness? *He that believeth shall not make haste*, Isa. 28. 16. Had not the Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, *&c.* their time of waiting as well as you? Is not so glorious a State worth waiting for? And besides, if you *patiently continue in well-doing*, your Glory will be encreasing?

And to say no more, Eternity will be long enough to enjoy that Blessedness which is designed for you.

Tempt. 2. Are ye tempted to overvalue your present Attainments?

Answ. Consider ye have nothing but what ye have received, and *why then should ye glory as if ye had not received it?* 1 Cor. 4. 7. Ye have received nothing but what ye must give an account for. Your stock of Grace is to be traded with, your Talents must be improved; what reason then have ye to tremble less in this ye should be found wanting? Moreover, ye bear not the Root, but the Root beareth you; without Christ ye can do nothing, *be not high minded, but fear. Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.* 1 Cor. 10. 12. Spiritual Pride is the way to lose what ye have got, and to fall into the Condemnation of the Devil. Besides, there is a great deal of Absurdity and Self-contradiction in it, etc. for a Man to have high thoughts of himself, as if he had attained unto great Measures of Grace, when the entertaining of such Thoughts is a sign that he has little true Grace, if any at all. Deep Waters and full Vessels make least noise; the most fruitful Ears of Corn hang downwards; not so, those that are shallow, empty, or blasted.

Tempt. 3. Are ye for a factious siding with this or the other Party, and rashly censuring those that differ from you?

Answ. Think well how great a Sign this is of Weakness in Grace: Unripe Fruit is sowr, harsh, and unpleasant; so are raw Novices in Christianity: But further Experience and Humility would mellow and sweeten your Temper and Disposition. Remember how great a stress the Gospel lays upon fervent Charity; loving one another, is the Note or Mark whereby we must be known to be Christ's Disciples. The grand essential Points of Religion, which ye must

live

[illegible] are [illegible] owned, and acknowledged by [illegible] Parties: [illegible] then a great piece of Folly (the very common) to over-look these weightier Matters, and to suffer our Zeal to evaporate and spend it self about Wood, Hay, and Stubble? Of this see my Discourse concerning the *Immortality of the Soul*. Pag. 143. &c.

Tempt. 4. Are ye tempted to grow secure and careless, because ye think your Case is safe?

Answ. The greater your Hopes of Heaven are, so much the more reason ye have to be watchful against Sin, diligent and active in the way of your Duty: but if ye grow negligent or remiss in Matters of Religion, ye have cause enough to suspect that your Hopes and Confidence are ill-grounded, or not like to last long. 1 *Joh.* 3. 3. *Every Man that hath this hope in him, purifies himself, even as he is pure.*

Again; there are many Eyes upon you: The great God is the most reverend Witness of all your Thoughts, Words, and Actions: The Angels of God encompass you about, and observe your Behaviour: Satan waits to take you at an advantage; your fellow Christians are concerned for your Welfare and Perseverance: Wicked Men wait for your halting. Surely this is not a time for you to be slothful or unconcerned.

Moreover; suppose you be in a State of Grace: many that have been so have fallen into very grievous Sins, and wounded Conscience deeply; and your Safety depends upon the continual Influences of the Holy Spirit: and therefore it must needs be dangerous to grieve or quench that Spirit, by Laziness or carnal Security.

Tempt. 5. Doth the prospect of those Difficulties that lie in your way discourage you?

Answ. Is not Heaven worth striving for? Would ye have the Crown without Victory, or a Victory with-

[illegible] you? If ye be sincere, God is on your side, and [illegible] be with you when you pass through Fire or Water. *His Strength is made perfect in Weakness; his Grace sufficient for you.* 2 Cor. 12. 9.

The greatest Enemies that ye have without, I mean Satan and the World, are already vanquished by the Captain of your Salvation. And as for those enemies *within you*, that is your own Lusts and Corruptions, tho he had none such in himself to contend with, yet he has procured for you that Grace which shall certainly enable you to overcome them, if ye be not wanting to your selves. What tho indwelling Sin sticks very close to our Natures, it is not elected to them, nor had any place in Man's primæval State. And the second *Adam* came to heal those Diseases which the First had brought upon us. Therefore tho it be good to be sensible of your own Weakness, and to feel the Burden of Sin, that you may flie to Christ; yet ye have no reason to faint or be discouraged, because ye have him to flie to.

Tempt. 6. Are ye perplexed with troublesome Scruples as to matter of Practice, that ye dare scarce move forward in the way of your Duty, for fear of going wrong?

Answ. 'Tis certain that our best Services while we are here on Earth, will be attended with many sinful Weaknesses and Imperfections: But necessary Duty must not be left undone for fear of mis-doing it. That which God requires of us, is, that we chearfully and quietly obey his Will so far as we know it, and sincerely endeavour to understand it better. Thankfully receiving the Gospel-pardon for our many Failings and Infirmities. If we have the worthiness (for so the Gospel calls it) of Faith, Repentance and sincere Desire: Christ hath the Worthiness of perfect Holiness and Obedience for us. And tho it be not great

[illegible] to [illegible] Dominoseſſe render, [illegible] to be [illegible] to please God, and [illegible] of [illegible] [illegible] must remember that needleſs Self-tormenting [illegible] are not at all pleaſing to God, but great [illegible]rances to our Duty, and Devices of Satan to [illegible] Religion burdenſome and uneaſy to us. And [illegible] theſe and ſuch other Temptations ceaſe not [illegible] troubleſome, it is ſometimes neceſſary that we [illegible] them: The Devil (ſays *Luther*) is a proud [illegible], and cannot endure to be ſlighted. He will [illegible] work enough to do, if we will but parley and [illegible] the caſe with him. To ſlight him is to reſiſt [illegible], and then he flies from us.

Tempt. 7. Are ye tempted to enſnare your ſelves [illegible] Vows, and to make Duty to your ſelves [illegible] God never enjoined you; Or to impoſe [illegible] upon your ſelves which he has not preſcri[illegible]?

Anſw. The uſe of Vows is to bind us to the [illegible]rformance of that which God himſelf had bound [illegible] to by his Laws before: That is, to expreſs our [illegible]ſent and Reſolution by a Self-Obligation to obey [illegible] Will; but not make a new Religion to our [illegible]ves, nor to injure our Chriſtian Liberty by Self-[illegible]viſed Snares. Who hath required this at your [illegible]ds? Such ſacred things as Vows are not to be [illegible]fled with: our Baptiſmal Covenant and Sacra[illegible]ntal Engagements at the Lord's Table muſt be [illegible]efully obſerved: But Vows about leſſer Matters [illegible] not to be made without great Conſideration and [illegible]tion, alteration of Circumſtances may make that [illegible]ſul, or however troubleſome and inconvenient, which [illegible] preſent appears, and perhaps really is, a Duty: [illegible] Purpoſes and Reſolutions are neceſſary and [illegible], and may be changed when the nature of the [illegible] requires it; that is, when they ceaſe to be [illegible] to thoſe Ends whereunto they were firſt in[illegible]ded. But it is a dangerous thing after Vows

(or

(or Promises made to God) to make enquiry [illegible] the sometimes even that must be done, yet [illegible] great fear and trembling: For God will not hold [illegible] guiltless that take his Name in vain.

Tempt. 8. Are you tempted to grow weary of [illegible]rious Religion, and to turn back again to your [illegible]ted Formality and Negligence?

Answ. Humble your selves deeply before God [illegible] those Remnants of Corruption which thus dis[illegible] you to revolt; renew your Covenant with him [illegible] Christ; plead the Promise of his holy Spirit; [illegible] upon his Assistance and Grace: Make not a [illegible] Matter of the *least* Decays or Declinings in H[illegible]ness, for these tend to *greater*. Gird up the L[illegible] of your Minds, consider the Prize that is set [illegible]fore you: and look to the Examples of those [illegible] by Faith and Patience inherit the Promises; [illegible]vings and Difficulties will be soon over; [illegible] *weary of well doing, you shall reap if you faint* [illegible] Gal. 6. 9. Whither will ye flie in the Hour of your extremity? if the Lord help you not, *then*, who can help you? if ye forsake him, he will also [illegible]sake you.

Tempt. 9. Is there some beloved Sin which you are especially inclined to, and can scarce forbear, or part with it?

Answ. Fortify your Minds with Arguments, and your Wills with Resolutions against it. Avoid the occasions of it, and resist the first Strivings and Tendencies towards it. Double your Watch, that ye be not surprized by it; single it out to run it down; mortify and destroy it, as that which [illegible] dishonours God, and endangers your own Souls.

Tempt. 10. Are you tempted to place an unduly Confidence in your own Works or Righteousness?

Answ. Consider that if ye thus go about to establish

[illegible] of your own, you [illegible] the Benefits of Christ's Righteousness. If [illegible] and Life be of Grace, they cannot be of Works; else Grace were no more Grace. As we [illegible] Creatures, we owe our selves, and all that we [illegible] or can do to God; the greatest Angel in Heaven cannot strictly and properly merit any thing of God, how much less such Worms as we? Every [illegible] which we sincerely perform is a great Mercy received, and renders us further indebted to that Grace whereby we are enabled thereto. And besides, we stand in need of pardon for the sinful Weaknesses of our best Services. When we have done all, *we are but unprofitable Servants.* Eternal Life is a free Gift: By the Grace of God we are what we are.

II. We come now to the *second Branch of Exhortation*, namely, to those who are much in the Dark as to the State of their Souls, not knowing what to think of themselves in reference to this great Question, *viz. Whether they be passed from Death to Life?* that is, whether they be wrought for Heaven or no.

To such Persons I would offer the following Directions.

Direct. 1. Remember 'tis no new thing, nor unusual amongst the People of God, to be full of Doubts, Fears, and Spiritual Troubles. Do not think that your Case is singular, lest your Spirits should sink under it. *Solamen miseris, &c.* There hath nothing befal'n you in this Matter, but what is common to Men, even to very good Christians. It may be Satan will tempt you to think that none ever were so perplex'd with Fears, Uncertainties and misgiving Thoughts as you: But the Scripture is very plain in the case, that a truly gracious Person may sometimes *walk in Darkness and have no Light;*

Isa.

[illegible] also [illegible] and [illegible] that good Man was afflicted, and even [illegible] with the Terrours of the Almighty.

Therefore in all this, God deals no [illegible] with you, than he hath done with thousands his dearst Children. And as ye ought not to [illegible] spise the chastenings of the Lord, so neither [illegible] ye faint under them: *For whom he loveth he [illegible] steneth, and scourgeth every Son whom he [illegible]* Heb. 12. 5, 6.

Direct. 2. Take special care that no secret L[illegible] indulged, no wilful Sin maintained nor allowed [illegible] Sin will breed Doubts, and Fears, and Sorrow as naturally as a putrified Carcase doth Ver[illegible] unless ye be given up to a reprobate Sense. [illegible] will make your VVounds bleed afresh, no wo[illegible] if you feel the smart and anguish of them. [illegible] you weaken the Habits of Grace by contrary [illegible] you may thank your selves that ye cannot dis[illegible] the sincerity of those Habits. If ye grieve [illegible] Spirit who should comfort you, what can ye [illegible] pect but to be in the Dark, and so disconsolate? If you play at fast and loose with Conscience, [illegible] run counter to its Dictates, you may be sure [illegible] will wound you for your Folly, and pay you [illegible] for the Affronts you put upon it. If you will harbour the Enemies of your Lord, how can ye look [illegible] the Light of his Countenance? That Darkness [illegible] labour under is self-contracted; these Clouds whom of you complain, are of your own raising. *If [illegible] set up your Idols in your Hearts, God will answer [illegible] according to your Idols*, Ezek. 14. 4. In short, if [illegible] will be making bold with Sin, that Sin will [illegible] Sorrow and Trouble, if there be any Life of Gra[illegible] to feel it. Indeed if the Case be thus with [illegible] ye have great reason to bless God that ye are [illegible] quieted, and not given up to searedness of Con[illegible] science; and therefore, I say, away with your L[illegible]

[illegible] the Comforts of [illegible] the Assurances of his Love.

Direct. 3. Tho you want these special Comforts [illegible] Assurance, do not overlook those general Grounds [illegible] Encouragement that are still before you. These [illegible] firm, clear, and certain, how wavering, doubtful, [illegible] dark soever your Thoughts of your own particular Case may be: These are still at hand, how [illegible] soever the Evidences of your Sincerity are to [illegible]: These are the great Foundations upon which [illegible] Comforts must be built, and therefore you [illegible] need to understand and digest them thorowly, [illegible] lay the Apprehensions of them deep in your [illegible]. *Viz.*

[illegible] It is certain that God is infinitely Good, and [illegible] his Love, Mercy, and Compassion to poor [illegible] cannot be measured. He hath proclaimed [illegible] Name, that is, his Nature: *Exod.* 34. 6, 7. So *Psal.* 103. 8. *The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to Anger, and plentious in Mercy.* Isa. 55. 7. *He will abundantly pardon:* [or multiply to pardon] vers. 8. *For my Thoughts are not your Thoughts, neither are your Ways my Ways, saith the Lord. For as the Heavens are higher than the Earth, so,* &c. q. d. *quanto sum sublimior, tanto de clementior,* Grot. By how much I am higher than you, by so much I am more merciful. Remember all the Goodness of the Creatures is derived from him, and therefore he must needs be infinitely better than they all. How is it that you call his Power, Omnipotence, his Wisdom or Knowledg, Omniscience; and yet entertain such poor narrow Thoughts of his Goodness! Is he not All-good as well as Almighty, and All-wise? Are not his Attributes all alike Infinite? Is it not the Device of Satan to hide the Goodness of God from you? and to fill you with black unworthy Thoughts of him? that he may either quite keep you from him, or make your walking with him

[illegible]

[illegible] Therefore I say, [illegible] this [illegible] is a fundamental Truth, and accordingly [illegible] selves upon it, *viz.* That however it be, yet [illegible] is Good.

2. It is also certain that the Satisfaction of [illegible] is of infinite value: And that he is full of [illegible] derness and Pity to poor Sinners. Whatever he [illegible] or suffered, had a transcendant Excellency and [illegible] in it, from the Dignity of his Person; he was [illegible] as well as Man. And his Compassions to poor [illegible] ners are every where set forth in the Gospel; [illegible] earnestly did he treat with them in order to [illegible] Reconciliation and Peace with God! How feel[illegible] did he weep over them! How affectionatly [illegible] he pray even for those that persecuted and [illegible] him to the Death! He disdained not to con[illegible] with the meanest Persons; the poor and [illegible] had free access to him: How readily did he [illegible] Mercy to their Bodies, to prepare them for the [illegible] lief and Entertainment of that greater Mercy [illegible] had in store for their Souls!

3. Pardon and Life are freely offered to you [illegible] without exception, if ye will accept thereof upon [illegible] reasonable terms of the New Covenant. The way [illegible] open, *Whosoever will, let him take the Water of [illegible] freely. God was in Christ reconciling the World to him[illegible]* None are excluded by the tenor of the Gospel, but [illegible] as exclude themselves by their own wilful and [illegible] Impenitency.

Whatsoever Doubts or Difficulties arise before you, still keep close to these three grand Foundations [illegible] Comfort and Encouragement. Be your Case as [illegible] as it will, it cannot be desperate, unless ye make it [illegible] by persisting obstinately in it. Remember, the Love of God was the Cause of our Redemption by Jesus Christ; and our Redemption was the Foundation [illegible] the New Covenant. You have these three altogether, Joh. 3. 16. *For God so loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting Life.* Dire[illegible]

Direct. 4. Waste not your Time in fruitless Musings or heartless Complaints about your doubtful uncertain state, but fall forthwith to your certain Duty. What though you cannot tell whether as yet you have sincerely given up your selves to Jesus Christ, and accepted of him; I hope you are past doubt that ye ought so to do: Though ye be in the dark as to what's [illegible] your present Duty is plain and certain: The [illegible] is open, enter and live. Christ is willing if you be willing; he offers his Benefits to you, he presseth them upon you, and urgeth you to accept them: Come then, be of good chear; arise, he calleth you. Gird up the Loins of your Minds; sighing and complaining rid no Business: Set your selves to the work with all your might. Admit that you have not yet sincerely closed with Jesus Christ, 'tis not too late to do it now; and it is a thing that must be done, or you are undone forever. But if you suppose or hope you have done it already, it will be so much the other to do it again; nor will it be lost labour to renew your Covenant with him: The advantage is great every way. If your Souls be habitually for Christ, draw out those Habits into exercise, and that is the way to feel that you have them: Thus Grace will be more discernable, and Conscience more quiet, while you are intent upon your Duty. You may be saved though you should live and die under great Doubts and Fears as to your sincerity, but you cannot be saved except you *be* sincere. Therefore, observe, it much more concerns you to enquire *What shall I do to be saved?* than How shall I know that I shall be saved? And indeed this is the most likely way to get assurance, or however such necessary support as may keep you from sinking. It is one thing to have Grace, another thing to know that ye have: The former is absolutely necessary to Salvation, the latter is not so.

Moreover, Lord things are not easily discerned, [illegible] Faith, Love, Repentance, &c. (tho sincere) [illegible] not so soon discovered; Therefore, I say again, [illegible] pains with your own Hearts to bring them nearer [illegible] Christ, labour to be carried out towards him with [illegible] more full bent and resolution of Soul, even such [illegible] may clearly turn the Scale for him against all other Interests whatsoever; and this is the most dutiful, safe and ready way to know that you are sincere. Strong Grace will speak for it self. Children and weak Persons are apt to be peevish and full of Complaints, but with those that are more healthy and vigorous it is not so. Well then, either you are *now* willing to comply with the Offers of the Gospel, or not; if not, 'tis a sign you are yet in your Sins, and that this great Change has not yet passed upon you: But if you be willing, know that the Law of Grace is as much in force as ever; and therefore 'tis both your Duty and Interest to give up your selves to Christ, as tho you never had done it before. And this is the true way to revive and discover any Sparks of Grace in you, which at present lie hid under many Doubts and Discouragements. Cast your selves at the Feet of Christ, open your Case to him: Lord, I have a treacherous deceitful Heart, I know not how to trust it, I dare not say that I have as yet heartily accepted of thee as thou art offered in the Gospel, but since thou art still pleased to renew the Offer; Lord, I desire from the bottom of my Soul, to do it now: O do thou *keep this in the imagination of the Thoughts of my Heart, and prepare my Heart unto thee.* 1 Chron. 29. 18.

Direct. 5. Let not the Sense of your present Wants, nor the Fears you are under, make you forget or undervalue the Mercies which you have received. What tho you have not the special Comforts of Assurance? Have you therefore nothing to bless

God

God for? Has he not in some measure awakened you from the groſs and brutiſh Stupidity of a carnal unregenerate State? And made you ſollicitous about your ſpiritual and eternal Concerns? Has he not followed you with the Offers of his Grace, and the Strivings of his Spirit from one Ordinance and Providence to another? Has he not given you ſome tendencies of Soul towards him, ſome Deſires after him, ſome Breathings and Longings for an Intereſt in him? Doth he not ſtill wait to be further gracious to you? Are not the Arms of his Love and Grace ſtretched forth towards you, and ready to embrace you? Doth he not offer to take you by the Hand and reach you to go? What ſay you to all this? Is there no Tribute of Thankfulneſs due for ſo much Kindneſs? Do you think he will take it well at your Hands that ſo great Favours ſhould be extenuated and made nothing of by you? As if he had been a *Wilderneſs, or a Land of Darkneſs to you*, Jer. 2. 31. How can you entertain hard Thoughts of ſo good a God! How can you affect eſtrangedneſs from him any longer? Is ingratitude for what you have received the way to get more, or rather to forfeit what you have already? Do ye not know, that to be much in thankfulneſs would familiarize and ſweeten the Thoughts of God to you, and ſhould not ingenuity it ſelf teach you to acknowledg his Favours? Would not this mightily tend to drive away that Darkneſs, Fear, and bitterneſs of Spirit whereof you are ſtill complaining? Surely the nearer you get to God in the exerciſe of Love and Praiſe, the more your Clouds and Doubts will vaniſh; the remembrance of Mercy and Kindneſs received is in its own Nature pleaſant and refreſhing to the Soul: And the more you own him, the more Light and Comfort you may expect from him. What tho you have not all that you could wiſh? 'Tis certain you have much more than you deſerve, yea contrary

to your ill-deservings. Therefore I say, thank God heartily for what you have received, and do not forget his Benefits.

Direct. 6. Observe well whether your own Safety and Comfort be not too eagerly look'd at in your Desires after Assurance, while in the mean time any Glory which may redound to God thereby is but coldly, or not at all regarded. It much concerns you that your ends and aims be rightly ordered and settled in this Matter; Carnal self too oft intrudes into, and so corrupts our Desires even after spiritual things. VVatch your Hearts narrowly here, 'tis ten to one but you find them very faulty. Our own VVelfare and Peace may indeed be aimed at, but in full subordination to the Divine Glory. VVhat is the interest of a VVorm, to the honour and interest of the great God? How can you expect to prosper while Self is so much look'd at, and God so little? Know ye not that even your Souls themselves, and all their Hopes and Comforts, must be entirely submitted to his all-comprehending Interest? VVell then, let me ask you, what is it that makes you so desirous after Assurance? Is it only that you may be more safe, or that you may be more serviceable? That your Minds may be more quiet, or that you may with more Heart and Vigour lay out your selves for God in Praise, Thankfulness and Obedience? If it be the Honour of God that you design in it, know that he is glorified by the Humility, Self-resignedness, Patience and Constancy of his Servants, even when they are under great Doubts and Fears, and this he expects from you as most suitable to your present Circumstances. You must not expect all plain way; God is wont to make Men feel the bitterness of their former Disobedience, and to lay them low in Self-abhorrence, before he build them high in Comfort and Assurance. He delights in glorifying his Grace and Power,

Power, by supporting his People under their Fears and Conflicts; as well as in refreshing them with the Joys and Comforts of his holy Spirit. And are ye not willing to submit to his Methods? Here's carnal Self with a witness. What! may he not do what he will with his own? Remember the Disciples in Christ's School are not all of one standing, it is enough that all the Sincere are in safe Hands: Labour therefore rather to be sincere, than to know that you are so.

Direct. 7. Lay not too great a Stress upon the stirrings of Affections and the passionate feeling thereof in religious Exercises. These are no sure Marks to judg of your State by: Because they ebb and flow variously according to the Temper and Disposition of our natural animal Spirits. Tho lively Affections in Duty are very desirable, and should be endeavoured after; yet in trying our spiritual Estate, the inward deep rational workings of our Souls towards God are mainly to be look'd at, viz. a fixed and high estimation of him above all in our Understandings, an hearty Resolution for him, and cleaving to him in our Wills, with correspondent Endeavours to please him and be accepted of him, through the whole course of our Lives: In these things it is that the Life of Grace and Duty doth consist. Those are the holiest Souls who are inwardly and deeply most inclined towards God, resolved for him, and solliciteous to please him: Not those who have the most transporting Passions or moveable Affections. The sacred Recesses of the Mind (as I may allude to that of the Poet, *Persius Satyr* 2d.) are more inward; the affectionate Part comes more into view. God is not an object of Sense, and therefore more fit for the Understanding and Will, than the Passions to work upon. The grand Essentials of Holiness are more deep and steady; passionate stirrings of Af-

Affection make a greater noise, but are nothing near so valuable. Besides, weak Judgments and strong Passions oft go together: The wisest and weightiest Persons are usually most sedate, and composed.

Direct. 8. Remember that God often makes the fullest discoveries of his Love to his People, when they are engaged in the most difficult Self-denying Parts of Duty and Obedience: It would be endless to tell you of the transporting Joys which many of the Martyrs have found in their sharpest Sufferings: When all Men have forsaken them, God hath stood by them, and comforted them: He hath visited them in their Prisons, and enlarged their Souls with spiritual Refreshments, when their Bodies have been under confinement: He hath enabled them to triumph in the very Flames, and to baffle their Enemies by their Patience, Magnanimity and Chearfulness in Suffering. *Paul* and *Silas* sung in the Stocks: *Stephen* had Heaven opened to him when his Enemies were raging against him: The three Children in the fiery Furnace have one walking with them like the Son of God. 'Tis true indeed, we are not to run upon Sufferings till God call us thereto; but if it please him so to do, we ought thankfully to accept of such a Call, as a Prize put into our Hands for the exercise of our Graces, and the advancement of our Comforts. But on the other Hand, if you be for taking up with a cheap and easy Religion, and excusing your selves from the more difficult self-denying Parts of Duty, it is a sign your Graces are but weak at best, and therefore your Comforts are not like to be strong. Would you sow sparingly and reap plentifully? How can you expect full Assurance of the Love of God, while you care not how little you lay out your selves for him?

And

And what tho you are not called to the fiery Trial: Yet if you will but fet your ſelves earneſtly to the frequent diligent ſpiritual Exerciſe of religious Duties, to the mortification of your beloved Luſts, and to the doing of all the good you can in the ſeveral places wherein you ſtand; you will certainly find Difficulties enow to exerciſe your Graces, and to make way for your greater Comforts, becauſe the Fleſh will draw back from ſuch work as this: the World is at hand ready to entangle you, Satan will do his worſt to hinder you, and ſo will all his Inſtruments. Accuſtom your ſelves to ſelf-denying Obedience, and in ſo doing you may expect the Comforts of the Holy Spirit.

Direct. 9. Underſtand aright the ordinary Methods which the Spirit takes in comforting the Souls of Believers, leſt you abuſe your ſelves by expecting what is unuſual or extraordinary.

'Tis certain that none have a Right to the ſaving Benefits of the Covenant of Grace, but thoſe who comply with the Terms of that Covenant. Nor can any have the Comforts of Aſſurance, who do not know that they have ſo complied. Now 'tis the Spirit that enables us to aſſent to the Truth of the Goſpel, and particularly to the Truth of the Promiſes that are made to ſincere Believers: And it is he that inclines our Hearts by his Grace to accept of the Benefits offered, and to perform the Duties required; that is, truly to repent of our Sins, and to give up our ſelves to God in Chriſt: And when we have ſo done, our Caſe is ſafe. But in order to the comfort of Aſſurance, 'tis further requiſite to diſcern our own ſincerity in this Covenant-cloſure; and from thence to conclude that we are in a juſtified State; and have a Right to the heavenly Felicity. Now here we ſtand in need of further help from the Spirit, that we may

be enabled to discern the Grace which he hath wrought in us, and so to draw that comfortable Conclusion, *viz.* that we are passed from Death to Life. Thus you see the Spirit comforteth Believers, and gives them Assurance of Salvation in a rational way, by helping them to discover the Evidences of their Sincerity: And it is foolish Presumption to expect Assurance any other way, as if the Spirit would enable Men to rejoice in they know not what, or to conclude they shall be saved they know not why. We must be able to *give a reason of the Hope that is in us*, 1 Pet. 3. 15. So doth the Apostle here in the words of the Text.

O do not deceive your selves by expecting enthusiastical Impulses, irrational Raptures, unwarranted Voices to tell you that you are the Children of God: But rather endeavour to get such a Frame and Disposition of Soul as becomes his Children, and thence to conclude that you are such. The sanctifying operations of the Spirit in Believers are the Witness or Evidence of their Adoption.

Take care also, that you deceive not your selves by expecting such Raptures of Joy as are extraordinary; all are not fit for such degrees of Comfort, nor would know how to manage themselves if they had it. But if you have so much as tolerably supports your Spirits, and keeps them from sinking, bless God, and be humble: And have a care of Peevishness or Impatience.

Direct. 10. Distinguish carefully between your State in the main, and the more remote Accidents or Circumstances wherewith it may be attended: Between what's necessary to the Being of a sincere Christian, as such, and what's further requisite to his Well-being, Growth and Comfort: Or (if you will) between foundation and building work: If these

things be confounded, it is scarce possible
should have any settled peace and quiet in your

Those who have truly consented to the Cove-
of Grace, that is, whose Hearts and Lives
in the main, for God, Christ, Holiness and
ven; such, I say, are in a justified State,
have a Right to eternal Life. But then it must
remembred, that even such Persons themselves
oft guilty of great Defects and Intermissions
the exercise of Grace, and in the performance
religious Duties, yea, and sometimes fall in-
great Sins (besides those of daily Infirmity)
therefore are often called to Repentance, Hu-
iliation and Amendment, and to renew their Co-
nant with God in Christ, and to act Faith upon
Merits and Satisfaction for Pardon and Peace,
to double their Watch and Diligence for the
ture, when in the mean time they are not, per-
ps, obliged at all to call in question their Foun-
tion, nor to perplex themselves with Doubts and
ars as to their State in the main. Indeed as
for those who do fall into grosser Sins, and lie
long in them, even such Sins as they might easily
forbear if they were truly willing, such have
great reason to question their own Sincerity: But
as for the common Infirmities of the Godly, yea,
or their greater falls through Inadvertency, Sur-
prize, or the violence of some sudden Temptati-
on, the Case here is quite different: If a Work-
man when he has laid his Foundation, and is pro-
ceeding forward in the Building, should upon every
leser, or some few greater mistakes, in the Super-
structure, pull down all again, and question the Foun-
dation it self, he would make very little progress,
and so have but little comfort in his Work: So
here, true Believers who are in a justified State,
have still need to beg daily Pardon for their daily
Sins, yet ought they not to give way to needless

lest Doubts or misgiving Thoughts as to their S... in the main: *For if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous.* 1 Joh. 2. 1. *He that is washed, needeth not, save to wash his Feet, but is clean every whit.* John 13. 10.

When *David* had sinned so grievously in the matter of *Uriah*, and *Nathan* the Prophet was sent to him to expostulate with him about it, and bring him to a greater Sense of the Evil he had done, *&c.* we find that he humbly acknowledges his Transgression, earnestly implores the Divine Mercy, prays hard that the Holy Spirit of God may not be taken away from him: but we do not find that he was called to doubt of his State in the main, nor can we prove that he did so, but encouraged himself in the Mercy of God. Psal. 51. 17. *The Sacrifices of God are a broken Spirit, a broken and a contrite Heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.*

"There are (says a great Divine) some Sins "which every one that repenteth of them, doth "also forsake as to cease committing them: and there "are some lesser Sins, which they that repent "of them do hate indeed, but yet frequently re"new, as our defective degrees in the exercise of "Repentance it self, Faith, Love, Trust, Fear, Obedience, our vain Thoughts and Words, some "sinful Passions, *&c.* many such Sins are fitly called Infirmities, because they consist with Life, "and are forgiven. It is of great use to the "peace of our Consciences to discern the difference "between these two: for one sort require a Conversion to another State; and the other require "but a particular Repentance; and when they are "unknown, are forgiven without a particular Re"pentance, because our general Repentance is vir"tually, though not actually, particular as to them. "One sort are cause of judging our selves ungodly, "and the other sort are only cause of Filial Hu-

"mi-

[illegible]iliation. [*Baxter's Directory, part 1. pag. 299.*]

Direct. 11. Though you cannot yet attain to the [illegible]er comforts of Assurance, do not therefore under[illegible]lue any thing that looks hopefully, or hath a likely [illegible]dency thereto. Great things are not usually at[illegible]ned but by degrees, and through many difficul[illegible]; 'tis no small matter to be certain that we are [illegible] justified State, nor is such a certainty so com[illegible] among true Believers themselves, as perhaps [illegible] imagine, who yet have considerable Support [illegible] Comfort from hopeful Probabilities in the case. [illegible]w as 'tis necessary to pull down the vain Hopes [illegible] presumptious Sinners, so it also is to strengthen [illegible] help the Joys and Hopes of weak Christians. [illegible]ll then, let me ask you, Are you not grieved [illegible] the many Offences you have committed against [illegible]? at least, Is it not your trouble that you can [illegible]ourn for Sin no more? that your Hearts are no [illegible]re tender and relenting? Is it not your desire, [illegible] in some measure your endeavour, to renounce [illegible]r Sins, and to mortify your Corruptions? [illegible]ould you bear the thoughts of parting with Christ, [illegible] quitting your Interest in him (for all your [illegible]ubts) and letting go your hold of him, for any [illegible]ing that could possibly be offered you in exchange? [illegible]ould you not even loath and abhor the Proposal? [illegible] it not your endeavour to love him more, and [illegible]rve him better? Put such Questions as these are [illegible] your own Souls, and then judge whether in all [illegible]is there be not something that appears to be more [illegible]en like special Grace. And though you are not [illegible] certain that it is so, yet let thus much support [illegible] till you can see further: And (as I said before) [illegible] thankful for what you have, and strive for more Grace, and then you shall find that spiritual strength and comfort will increase together. And all along be sure to remember that God and the Redeemer are as willing to accept you upon Gospel-terms as

you

you can be to desire it, yea, and infinitely more willing, as loving Holiness better than you do, the Match break between Christ and you, it shall through your own refusal. Never was any Sinner before-hand with him; he is the first in consenting, and is a Suitor to us for our full and hearty consent, nor will he despise the least testimonies thereto. *He will not break the bruised Reed,* &c. On his part all is safe and clear; prevail but with thy own Heart to hold on and go thorow with the work, and All's thine own.

Direct. 12. Be sure that you exercise the most deep and entire Self-resignation to the sovereign Pleasure of the Divine Will in this matter. Leave it unto God to measure out your Comforts unto you, and to determine the Time and Season thereof. Lay your Souls at his Feet with the profoundest Reverence, Humility and Submission; say, as *David* in another Case, *It may be the Lord will look upon my Affliction* —— *But if he say he have no delight in me: behold, here am I, let him do as seems good unto him,* 2 Sam. 15. 26. *O learn to wait upon the Lord, and look for him when he seems to hide his Face,* Isa. 8. 17. It is not possible that you should be Losers by thus resigning your Souls and your All into his Hand; 'tis your certain Duty so to do, and it will be a mighty evidence of that Sincerity which you are seeking after. And there are many comfortable Promises made to such actings of Soul as these, and encouraging Examples set before us. *Blessed are all they that wait for him. Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine Heart: Wait I say on the Lord.* Psal. 27. 14. Methinks that such a Promise should do more with you than just keep you from sinking. See also Psalm. 40. 1, 2. *I waited patiently for the Lord,* &c. *It is good that a Man should both hope, and quietly wait for the Salvation of the Lord.* Lam. 3. 26.

Re-

member, God waited long on you before you did take up any serious thoughts of repenting and turning to him; and doth it become you to sit down in sullen discontent, because he doth not immediately give you the Comforts of Assurance? I would think common Ingenuity should teach you better. Light is *sown* for the Righteous: sooner or later they shall reap the blessed fruit: But in as much as 'tis sown, it is meet that they should wait till this precious Fruit grow ripe, or rather till they themselves be grown to a maturity and fitness for it; God's time is the best time: He knows perfectly what Degrees of Comfort are fittest for you, and what the fittest time is to bestow it: The Husbandman after he hath cast his Seed into the Earth, doth not immediately expect an Harvest, nor yet say I have laboured in vain, I will pull up the Hedg and lay all waste. No, no, his *God instructs him to greater discretion.* Isa. 28. 26. He waits till the appointed season: So do you in the present Case; wait God's time for Comfort, give an early check to the least strivings of Impatience: Say not, *Why should I wait upon God any longer?* as he, 2 *King.* 6. 33. rather as the Psalmist, Psal. 42. 11. *Why art thou cast down, O my Soul?* &c. *hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him,* &c.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIII.

Directions to those who have attained to greater degrees of Assurance and Comfort.

WE come now to the third Branch of Exhortation, namely to those who through Grace have attained unto greater Measures of Assurance, and are enabled comfortably to conclude that they are past from Death to Life: to such I would say,

In general; *Hold fast what you have, that no man take away your Crown*, Rev. 3. 11. Keep close to God and your Redeemer, live in the Spirit, walk in the Spirit: *Be stedfast and immoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord*, &c. 1 Cor. 15. 58. You know whom you have trusted, gird up therefore the Loins of your Minds. We must tug a while with the Difficulties of our present State and Work, but these will soon be over. Heaven is in view, we are almost there, and shall certainly reap if we faint not. But I proceed to Particulars.

Direct. 1. Whatever you do, be sure to keep humble; look upon Pride as the first-born of the Devil. 'Tis a Sin which God doth in an especial manner set himself against. *God resisteth the Proud* [ὑπερηφάνοις] *Jam.* 4. 6. He stands in battle array, or in direct defiance and opposition against them. God still counteracteth the Proud, as Dr. *Manton*

Austin observes upon the place. 'Twas this which turned Angels into Devils, as may be observed from that of the Apostle, 1 Tim. 3. 6. *Lest being lifted up with Pride, he fall into the Condemnation of the Devil.* Pride is still the fore-runner of some fall and mischief or other. And tho in the truly Godly it be in some measure mortified, yet is it not utterly rooted out, but sticks very close to our Natures; and if it be not carefully watched against, it will be taking occasion to shew it self even from our Spiritual Gifts or Graces: And whatever it comes near is tainted and corrupted by it. O let us think, and think again, how unsuitable it is to our condition to be lifted up with high thoughts of our selves; how much disingenuity there is in it, what have we, that we have not received? and what were we before we received it? And what should we quickly be again if we were not upheld by the Divine Power? *We bear not the Root, but the Root beareth us*, Rom. 11. 18. *Without him we can do nothing*, Joh. 15. 5. Let us therefore endeavour to be cloathed throughout with Humility, this is (as one says) a Christian's Livery without which Christ will not own us as his Servants. Let us learn of him to be meek and lowly in Heart. Let the Mind be in us that was in Christ, *who made himself of no Reputation*, [ἐκένωσεν] emptied himself, &c. *Phil.* 2. 7. Let us exercise our selves frequently and solemnly in Self-Annihilation; that is, in affecting our Hearts with a deep sense of our own Nothingness in the sight of God, and this I advise you to do as a set Duty by it self, and allow time enough to subdue the Pride of our Hearts. Think not that some slight Thoughts or general Acknowledgments of your own Unworthiness, will serve the turn, but labour to feel what you say, and to be nothing in your own Eyes.

Go therefore into your Retirements, sit down and consider the glorious Excellencies of the great

God:

God, before whom the Angels vail their Faces, who looketh upon the Sun and it shineth not, neither are the Heavens clean in his sight: *Who doth great things, and unsearchable, marvelous things without number*, Job 5. 9. Get your Hearts as full as they can hold of adoring and admiring Thoughts of God. And when you have so done, reflect upon yourselves, and you will find abundant reason to say, out, Lord, what am I? A Worm and no Man, sinful Dust and Ashes, foolish and ignorant, and as a Beast before thee! Less than the least of all thy Mercies! nothing, or worse than nothing, &c. &c. &c.

I know not any thing more suitable to our Condition, more pleasing in the sight of God, more conducive to our spiritual Safety and Comfort, than to be much employed in such exercise as this.

Be not desirous of vain Glory, do not affect the Applause of Men, if you meet with it; watch your Hearts as you would do Gun-powder, Tinder, or Flax when Fire is near. Still say, give Glory to God, I am a poor, vile, worthless Sinner.

Direct. 2. Press earnestly towards the Mark. You have not yet attained, there is a great deal of Work still on your Hand, many Enemies to conflict withal: You have run well hitherto, O have a care of making a stand. —— *Ad ulteriora tendens semper* —— *nilque putans actum dum quid superesset agendum.* —— (as it was said of *Julius Cesar*) is a fit Motto for a Christian, still pressing forward, aiming at greater Attainments, and thinking nothing done, while any thing remains undone: Phil. 3. 13, 14. *Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before;* —— *I press toward the Mark* &c.

Under

Under this Head you may observe the following Particulars.

1. Carry on a continual Warfare against your remaining Corruptions; the Flesh will be lusting against the Spirit, so long as we are here on Earth. Labour therefore to keep under the Body, and to bring it into subjection. Do not indulge your corrupt carnal Inclinations, how agreeable soever to your Constitutions or worldly Interest. Have a care of being in love with fleshly Prosperity and Ease. Search after those Sins which do most easily beset you, those Corruptions which do most frequently foil you, and single them out to run them down: Spare them not, but deal with them as *Samuel* with *Agag*, *hew them in pieces before the Lord.* Fortify your selves with Arguments against them: keep a strict watch, go not to the utmost extent of your Christian Liberty; resist the first stirrings of them, the least tendencies towards them. Prov. 30. 32. *If thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thy self, or if thou hast thought evil, lay thine Hand upon thy Mouth.* Avoid as much as possible the occasions of Sin, especially of your beloved Sins: Habituate your selves to frequent serious Thoughts of the Presence of God. *Set the Lord always before you*, Psal. 16. 8.

2. Make not a light Matter of the least decays in Grace, or Tendencies toward backsliding. What tho it should be granted that a regenerate Person cannot (or rather shall not, *Jer.* 32. 40.) fall away finally; yet it is past all Doubt that such an one may fall very foully, so as to grieve the Holy Spirit, to wound his own Conscience, to blemish his Profession, and to obscure his Evidences: And is not all this sad enough?

Moreover; 'tis certain Men usually decline by degrees, and therefore the least Degrees or Tendencies thereto are not to be slighted.

If therefore you find that Conscience begins to grow less tender than formerly it was; if Sin sit lighter, and the sense of remaining Corruption is less grievous to you than heretofore: If you grow more customa-

ry and careleſs in religious Duties, and leſs regardful to keep up the Life of holy Communion with God in Chriſt: If you can more eaſily let ſlip ſpiritual Opportunities, and find leſs reliſh and ſweetneſs in them than formerly; if the Intereſt of the the World and Fleſh begin to grow more prevalent with you, and you are ready to phancy that 'tis good to be here, while in the mean time your Thoughts of Heaven grow cold and languid, and your Deſires or Longings to be with Chriſt do abate: If you find it thus with you, you had need beſtir your ſelves in good earneſt to recover your firſt Love, and to ſtrengthen the things which remain, and are ready to die. Otherwiſe you little know how far the Spirit of God may be provoked, and what conſiderable Degrees both of Grace and Comfort may quickly be loſt. I need not tell you that Satan will do his worſt to hinder you in your way to Heaven; your own Corruptions, and the Snares of the World will get Ground upon you: You had need row hard againſt the Stream, which of it ſelf will carry you back, if you preſs not forward. *Non progredi erit regredi.*

3. Labour to grow in due proportion as to the ſeveral parts of Holineſs and Duty. The beauty of Holineſs (as of every thing elſe) conſiſteth much in the due ſymmetry and proportion of the ſeveral parts of it. Labour to exerciſe each Grace and Duty in its proper Order and Place, ſo that one may not interfere with, nor exclude another. See that your Judgments be well ſettled as to the great Principles of Religion, that your belief of them be firm, deep and ſolid. To this end labour to ſtudy and digeſt well the Articles of the Creed; let your Thoughts dwell much upon them, that you may underſtand the right meaning and due improvment of every Article.

Take care alſo that your Wills and Affections be full-fraught with becoming Reſolutions and Inclinations; that the Purpoſes and Deſires of your Souls be rightly ordered and placed: To this end ſtudy well the Lords Pray-

Prayer, both as to the matter and order of the ſeveral Petitions, and endeavour to form and ſettle the inclinations and Tendencies of your Souls accordingly. Eſpecially that the Glory of God be firſt and laſt in all your deſires, higheſt in your eſteem; and all things elſe defired in full Subſerviency thereto. Here lies the Life of Religion, and this we ſhould be ſtill contending and ſtriving to raiſe our Hearts more towards, that they may move more naturally, eaſily, and delightfully therein; that God's Intereſt may be of all others the neareſt and deareſt to us.

And then for the direction of your Practice, labour to underſtand the true ſenſe and extent of the ten Commandments, to ſee the Amiableneſs, Righteouſneſs and Perfection of the Divine Law, that you may heartily approve thereof, love it, and live accordingly. *Delighting in the Law of God, after the inner Man,* Rom. 7. 22.

The whole Frame of Chriſtian Principles, Graces and Duties, is beyond meaſure lovely, in the harmonious connexion of the ſeveral parts thereof. Labour therefore that this Frame may be more and more deeply imprinted upon your Hearts, and expreſſed in your Lives, *That ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing,* Jam. 1. 4. If you be maimed in one part, all the reſt will fare the worſe for that. Remember, Integrity is the Glory of a Chriſtian; *viz.* that no part be lacking. 2 Cor. 7. 1. *Perfecting Holineſs in the fear of God.* That is, let us ſee that no part of Holineſs be wanting in us, and that we be not wanting to any part of Holineſs, but ſtill preſſing forward towards Perfection even in degrees.

Take care, for example, that your Zeal be guided by Knowledg, leſt it ſet all on Fire, and prove miſchievous to your ſelves and others, or at beſt no better than an *Ignis fatuus.* And again, let your Knowledg be improved into holy Zeal and Fervency, that you be not luke-warm or indifferent in Matters of Religion, which moſt juſtly challenge our whole Hearts. *Rev.* 3. 15, 16. Let godly Sorrow, Repentance and

Humiliation for Sin be ſo exerciſed, as not to exclude humble Confidence in the Mercy of God, ſpiritual Joy, *&c.*

Again, if God give you a large ſhare of Aſſurance and Comfort; do not therefore think your ſelves above the fore-mentioned humbling Exerciſes; which will be a means to preſerve your Purity and Peace.

Moreover, let not the Duties of the firſt and ſecond Table juſtle out each other, but let both be duly and carefully obſerved in the ſeveral Branches of them. Think it not enough to be juſt and upright, or (as they call it) morally honeſt in your dealings with Men, except you be alſo ſerious, hearty, and ſincere in the Service of God, and in the devotedneſs of your Souls to him. And again, think not that any Worſhip or Service you perform to God will be accepted, while ſecond-Table duties are wilfully neglected. It is the deſign of Religion to make us better and more uſeful in every Relation and Capacity wherein we ſtand. 1 *Pet.* 2. 16, 17. 2 *Pet.* 1. 5, *&c. Tit.* 2. 12. We are enjoined to live *SOBERLY, RIGHTEOUSLY and GODLY in this preſent World, viz.* We muſt be Sober in the Government of our Senſes, Appetites, Affections, *&c.* Righteous in our dealings with Men, doing to others as we would that they ſhould do to us. Godly in the Tendency and Inclination of our Souls towards God, and the ſerious Diſcharge of Religious Duties.

To conclude this Head; Be not ſo intent upon any one part of Duty as to overlook the reſt. *Then ſhall we not be aſhamed when we have reſpect unto all God's Commandments,* Pſal. 119. 6. *I eſteem thy Precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every falſe way.* verſ. 128.

4. Continue inſtant in Prayer. The People of God are called in Scripture a *Generation of Seekers.* Pſal. 24. 6. So Pſal. 27. 8. *When thou ſaidſt, Seek ye my Face, my Heart ſaid unto thee, Thy Face, Lord, will I ſeek.* How often do we find this Duty preſs'd upon us! *Pray always,*

ways, pray and faint not, watch unto Prayer. Pray to your Father which ſeeth in ſecret. Pray every where, pray without ceaſing, &c. Yea, we find the holieſt Perſons frequently employed in this holy Duty. Pſal. 55. 17. *Evening and Morning, and at Noon will I pray, and cry aloud, and he ſhall hear my Voice*, Pſal. 109. 4. *I prayer*, ſo it is in the Hebrew: As if he were made up of Prayer. It were eaſy to heap up more Examples, but I forbear. O Sirs, it is on our Knees that we muſt get Strength to walk with God. The actuating of holy Deſires, and preſenting them to God, muſt needs tend in its own Nature to ſtrengthen thoſe Habits of Grace from which ſuch Deſires proceed. Beſides, as it is the performance of an undeniable Duty, (ſhould not a People ſeek unto their God?) a moſt reaſonable piece of Service, ſo an anſwerable Bleſſing may be expected upon it. *God is the Rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him.*

Open thy Mouth wide, and I will fill it, Pſal. 81. 10. Ask for great things, and with great Earneſtneſs; come not with mean poor narrow thoughts of the Divine Goodneſs; be not cold nor lazy in your Requeſts. *Bleſſed are they that hunger and thirſt after Righteouſneſs, for they ſhall be filled.* Mat. 5.

A learned Divine mentions ſecret Prayer in the fore-front of thoſe Duties to which our Souls are naturally moſt backward. [Mr. *Baxter.*]

Now one would think our own Neceſſities ſhould even conſtrain us to it. Alas, how ſhould we live without it! and how much doth it concern us to ſtrive againſt our Indiſpoſition to it! How ſweet is a Duty when reſcued out of the Hands of Difficulties!

O Sirs! whence is it that God hears no oftner from us, and with no greater fervency? Surely frequent and earneſt Approaches to the moſt holy God would be a great means to make us more like him.

Remember, God has ways enow to bring you to your Knees. What if dark Clouds ſhould ariſe upon you, or ſome ſharp Affliction befal you? then 'tis like-

ly, you would come crying after him, and *seek him early*, Hos. 5. 15. But why not without so much ado? why should not gentler Methods prevail with you? Be but acquainted with your own Hearts, and you need not want either Matter or Motives for this great Duty. Never expect to grow in Grace, without keeping up Life and Fervency in Prayer.

Give me leave to shut up this Head, with a Passage which I lately met with in the Life of the Excellent Mr. *Philip Henry*. To the Publisher whereof I here return my most humble Thanks. 'Tis as follows;

" *Pag.* 75. Be sure you look to secret Duty, keep " that up whatever you do; the Soul cannot prosper " in the neglect of it. Apostacy generally begins at " the Closet-door, secret Prayer is first neglected and " carelessly performed, then frequently omitted, and " after a while wholly cast off; and then farewel God, " and Christ, and all Religion.

5. Learn the Art of holy Meditation. 'Tis by this that we draw in Life, Strength and Sweetness from those great Gospel-Truths, which inconsiderate Persons lay by as if they were dead or useless things. 'Tis this that enlargeth our Knowledg and clears our Apprehensions in spiritual Matters, and sets on work our Resolutions, Affections, and all the Faculties and Powers of our Souls; 'tis a Soul-improving Duty indeed. Nor can you want Matter for such Meditation, if you will but set your Thoughts at work, and keep them close to it.

Meditate upon the glorious Excellencies and Perfections of the blessed God, his Power, Wisdom, Goodness, Holiness, Truth, All-sufficiency: Think I say on these, and think again, till becoming Impressions be wrought upon your own Spirits, *changing you from Glory to Glory*, 2 Cor. 3. 18. Think not upon God in a slighty or ordinary manner, but with the greatest Reverence and Admiration, lest you take his Name in vain, whereof you may be guilty in thought as well

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as in words. Let every Thought of God be mighty upon you, and participate in ſome ſutable Meaſure of the greatneſs of its Almighty Object.

Think much on your bleſſed Redeemer, who he was, what he did, what he ſuffered, and why, as alſo what he has further promiſed to do. Thus let Chriſt dwell in your Hearts.

Think on the Holy Spirit of Grace, call to mind his Influences and Operations upon your Souls, how infinitely you are obliged to him, how much you have ſtill to do with him. How direct and explicite you ought to be in your actings of Faith upon him, as well as upon the Father and the Son. And how careful you ſhould be to carry becomingly towards him.

Think on the Holineſs, Purity and Perfection of the Divine Law, how ſweet, how reaſonable, how advantageous that Obedience is which God has required of us. *O how I love thy Law! it is my Meditation all the Day*, Pſal. 119. 97.

Think on the Heavenly Perfection, what the Saints in Glory, and the bleſſed Angels are doing, what they are enjoying, till your Souls be on the Wing, longing to be joined to that holy and happy Society.

Think on the Graces wherein you are moſt defective, conſider the reaſonableneſs and neceſſity of them, and how ill you can live without them, or without greater degrees of them. Plead the cauſe of every Grace with your own Hearts, and in the midſt of your Meditations lift up your Eyes and your Souls to Heaven for help therein. O that you would be perſwaded to try this Courſe, to engage your ſelves in the frequent and ſolemn Exerciſe of this great Duty of Meditation: the advantage would be great every way. And that you may be the fitter for this more ſtated Exerciſe of Meditation, it will be very uſeful, in the midſt of your Employments and Buſineſs in the World, to be often ſending up a Thought or Ejaculation towards Heaven.

Direct. 3. If your Endeavours thus far prove successful, so that you find more Grace and Strength coming in thereby; lay out your selves so much the more for God. Much is expected from them to whom much is given. Your Talents are to be traded with, not hidden in a Napkin. As the Goodness of God abounds toward you, you must endeavour to abound in the Work of the Lord; that so it may appear, *that the Grace bestowed upon you is not in vain*, 1 Cor. 15. 10. 58. Surely 'tis fit God should have the Glory of his own Gifts, while you have the benefit and comfort of them. This is the way to receive more, *To him that hath, shall be given.*

Sit down and consider seriously, cast about in your Minds, what shall I do to promote the Honour and Interest of that God, who has done so much for me? Can you form no Project for greater serviceableness? I will try if I can help you by and by; in the mean time resolve to walk with God more humbly, strictly and watchfully than ever yet you have done: and joyfully to embrace every opportunity which it shall please God to put into your Hands, to testify your Thankfulness by humble and self-denying Obedience. 'Tis true God needs not you, you cannot be profitable unto him: But it is as true that he expects all this from you, as a due Expression of the Gratitude and Ingenuity of an honest Heart. Tho you cannot profit him, yet obedient you must be; and besides Soveraign Authority, you have many indearing Obligations thereto. I will shew you presently that you need not want work, but will endeavour first to fortify you against the difficulties of it.

Direct. 4. Let Patience have its perfect work. We have need of this Grace at every turn; the Race set before us will never be finish'd, nor scarce one Step rightly taken without it. *Heb.* 12. 1.

We must expect to meet with many Afflictions,

Psal.

Pſal. 34. 19. which cannot be born, nor improved as they ought, without patience. Whether they be ſuch as come more immediately from the Hand of God: *Shall we not be ſubject to the Father of Spirits, and live?* Heb. 12. 9. *q. d.* We muſt be ſubject, our Lives lie on it. To mutiny is mortal; as one gloſſes upon the place. It is the Lord, let him do what ſeems good in his Eyes. When God is glorifying himſelf in correcting us, we muſt with *Aaron* hold our Peace. *Lev.* 10. 3. Be ſtill, and know that he is God: Dumb, and not open our Mouths, becauſe he does it.

If we be afflicted by the Pride or Malice of Men, here again we have need of Patience, that we fret not our ſelves becauſe of Evil-doers; nor entertain any peeviſh revengful Thoughts againſt them. There's more of Chriſtianity in this than moſt Profeſſors think of. To be habitually diſpoſed, *to bleſs thoſe that curſe us, and to overcome Evil with Good.* And indeed we ſhall never be able to bear the *Contradiction of Sinners*, without fainting in our Minds, except we exerciſe Patience, and eye the Example of Chriſt, *Heb.* 12. 2, 3.

Again; are we aſſaulted by the Temptations of Satan? we ſhall never conquer without Patience.

Moreover, we have need of Patience to carry us through the religious Duties to which we are daily called. Becauſe our ſluggiſh Hearts are ſtill drawing back from Duty, and are prone to grow weary of it, and reluctate againſt it. Theſe Fruits of Righteouſneſs will be blaſted, or miſerably impaired, if not brought forth with Patience, *Luke* 8. 15. So prone are we to be weary of well-doing!

Laſtly, *We have need of Patience, that after we have done the Will of God, we may receive the Promiſe*, Heb. 10. 36. That we may wait God's time for our glorious Reward. The wiſeſt Man tells us, Prov. 13. 12. *Hope deferred, makes the Heart ſick.*

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'Tis Patience therefore that muſt keep us from fainting. O what need have we to pray, *That the Lord would direct our Hearts into the Love of God, and into the patient waiting for Chriſt!* 2 Theſſ. 3. 5.

Direct. 5. Put on bowels of Compaſſion to the Souls of others. Say not with *Cain, Am I my Brother's keeper?* nor yet think that Miniſters only are obliged to promote the *common Salvation*. Methinks you ſhould be deſirous to take as many along with you to Heaven as you can. Are you not taught to pray, *That the Name of God may be hallowed, his Kingdom come, and his Will be done in Earth, as it is in Heaven?* And muſt not theſe Prayers be ſeconded with ſuitable Endeavours in your places? Striving to help on others, will be a means to exerciſe, and increaſe your own Graces, and to advance your Comforts: It will be a ſign that you love Chriſt ſincerely, when you lay out your ſelves to promote his Intereſt. And ſince God hath had Compaſſion upon you, ought ye not to have ſome Compaſſion upon your Brethren. I know the Devil will do his utmoſt to oppoſe you, but you muſt be armed with Reſolution and Patience. *There are more with you than against you.*

When you meet with any that are buffeted with Temptations, perplex'd with Doubts and Fears; remember it might have been your own Caſe. Labour therefore to adminiſter Comfort to them, by religious Converſence, Communication of Experiences, and all other proper Means that fall in your way; do not deſpiſe the meaneſt of them.

And then, as for thoſe that are in an unregenerate State; how can you look upon them, and not be deeply concerned for them? The leſs they pity themſelves, the greater objects of your pity: If the Children of *Iſrael* were obliged to be kind to Strangers

gers, and not to vex or oppreſs them, becauſe they themſelves had been ſuch in the Land of *Egypt*, and therefore *knew the Heart of a Stranger*, *Exod.* 23. 9. *Levit.* 34. O then what reaſon have you to pity thoſe that are in an unconverted Eſtate, eſtranged from God! It was once your own Caſe, you cannot but know what a dead, dark, diſaffected thing the Heart of ſuch a Perſon is; how obdurate and ſenſeleſs. O think what they are doing, and whither they are going, if Infinite Mercy do not prevent. Happy you, if you can help to ſave one Soul from Hell! But let me urge this Point ſomewhat more diſtinctly.

1. Begin with thoſe that are under your ſpecial Care and Charge: If theſe periſh through your neglect, look you to it, their Blood will be required at your Hands. Thoſe of you that have Families, think how much you have to do for God in them. It may be ſome of you will ſay, we keep up religious Exerciſes in our Houſes, viz. Praying, Reading the Scriptures, and Singing the Praiſes of God. I anſwer, thus far is well, I wiſh more could ſay ſo too: But this is not all that you have to do; Children and Servants are to be dealt with plainly, familiarly, and tenderly, by you, with all the Skill and Application you can in order to the Salvation of their Souls. I muſt not ſtay to give you particular Directions, honeſt Hearts and a ſincere deſire to do their Souls good, will ſoon put you in a way to do it.

2. You have a great deal to do for the Souls of your Neighbours. Are not many of them ignorant, carnal and ungodly? Can you contrive no way to be helpful to them? Have you no particular Intereſt in ſome of them? Have they no dependance upon you? Are they under no ſpecial Obligations to you? Why are not all theſe Advantages improved for God? Can you ſee them periſhing

ing by Multitudes round about you, and not once open your Mouths to help them? Is this to love your Neighbours as your selves?

3. In a word, I tell you, 'tis your duty to take all opportunities, wherever you come, or with whomsoever you converse, to do good to Souls. I do not mean that sacred Things should be exposed by rashness, indiscretion or imprudent management, nor Pearls cast before Swine, who will turn again and rent you: But one thing I will tell you, as bad as the World is, the Names of Holiness, Justice, Purity, Religion, *&c.* are still honourable among Men, and the contrary Vices are accounted odious: No Man would be look'd upon as an impious, profane, unrighteous Villian. Now this gives you some advantage; and a willing Mind may find many ooportunities to bring in good Discourse, and that in such a way as the worst of Men should scarce dare to contradict it. There is somewhat in serious Religion which commands Awe and Reverence, even from them that hate it. *Herod feared John the Baptist, knowing that he was a just Man and an holy*, Mark. 6. 20. As for those that are civilized or moralized (as some speak) the difficulty is next to nothing, to bring in some edifying Discourse among them, and to leave some good savour behind you. (Christians should be *the Salt of the Earth*, Mat. 5. 13.) And to let them know that the Life of Religion is somewhat more than they seem to place it in. Can you not gently and prudently reprove the Sins of others, where you think it may do good? I know that this is a Duty that goes as much against the Grain as almost any; but the Scripture is plain, Lev. 19. 17. *Thou shalt not hate thy Brother in thine Heart, thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy Neighbour, and not suffer Sin to be upon him.* Or, as the words may be rendered [that thou bear not Sin for him] you make your selves Partakers with other Men in their Sins, if

if you endeavour not to prevent them. In ſhort, God will own thoſe that own him, and ſtand up for his Cauſe; and if that be not enough, ſee where you can find a better Patron.

Moreover, as for thoſe that are poor and low in the World, you might make way for doing good to their Souls, by ſhewing Kindneſs to their Bodies, if you thought it worth the while to be at any expence for the intereſt of Chriſt in the World. I ſay no more than this, if it were poſſible that Grief could have any place in Heaven, this ſure would be the matter of it; to remember how little we had done for God on Earth.

Direct. 6. Be much in the exerciſe of thoſe Graces and Duties which tend moſt directly Heavenward, and are neareſt a-kin to that bleſſed State. This is the way to make you ripe for Glory. You need not ſtay for all of Heaven till you come thither; there are great Foretaſts of it to be enjoyed on Earth, if you be not wanting to your ſelves. You may feaſt your Souls upon the Proviſions which Chriſt hath made for your preſent ſupport, and more eſpecially upon thoſe diſcoveries which he has given you of the Glory intended for you; and you have need ſo to do, leſt you faint by the way. I may ſay to you as the Angel to *Elijah*, 1 King. 19. 7. *Ariſe and eat, becauſe the Journey is too great for thee.*

1. Live by Faith upon the great Promiſes of the Goſpel, whereby the Heavenly Glory is made ſure unto true Believers; realize thoſe Promiſes: there remaineth a Reſt for the People of God. *Bleſſed are the dead that die in the Lord*, &c. *If any Man ſerve me let him follow me, and where I am, there ſhall alſo my Servant be. If any Man ſerve me, him will my Father honour. Theſe are the true Sayings of God.* Rev. 19. 9. How comes it to paſs that they are no more conſidered, and lived upon? What

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tho at preſent we have not the ſatisfaction of immediate intuition, know ye not that Faith is to be inſtead of ſight, till we come to Heaven, *Heb.* 11. 1. But alas! how apt are we to take up with ſome dark, dreaming, confuſed Notions and Thoughts, inſtead of the lively Exerciſe of ſuch a Faith.

2. Labour to ſtir up in your ſelves earneſt Longings after this bleſſed State. How can we ſay we love our Lord, if our Hearts be not with him? Should we not *ſet our Affections on things above, where Chriſt ſitteth on the right Hand of God?* Col. 3. 1, 2. Our Lord is there, our Inheritance is there, many of our Friends and Acquaintance are gone before; how ill doth it become us to ſuffer our Hearts to ſtag as if we were indifferent whether we followed them or no? Surely *we ſhould groan earneſtly, deſiring to be cloathed upon with our Houſe which is from Heaven,* 2 Cor. 5. 2. Do but obſerve how eager and intent Worldlings are upon empty Vanities, things that cannot profit: And ſhall we be ſo cold and heartleſs in the Tendencies of our Souls towards that Happineſs which is ſolid and ſubſtantial? Were our Hearts more ſet upon Heaven, it would put Life and Savour into all our Duties, it would ſupport us under Afflictions, and enable us to baffle Temptations; it would be an Evidence of our Sincerity, and raiſe us above the ſlaviſh Fears of Death. But I proceed,

3. Be much in the exerciſe of a lively well-grounded Hope. Faith preſents the heavenly Glory to the view of the Soul, Deſire reacheth forth towards it, Hope lays hold upon it. To this we are *begotten again,* 1 Pet. 1. 3. *By this we are ſaved,* Rom. 8. 24. See firſt that your Hopes be rightly grounded, and then that they be duly exerciſed.

4. And now it is time that your Souls ſhould be affected with ſpiritual Joy. Faith and Hope muſt both contribute to this. Thus we read of Joy in believing, and of rejoicing in Hope. Read

Pſal.

Pſal. 32. 11. *Phil.* 4. 4. 1 *Theſſ.* 5. 16. You are over and over commanded to rejoice, 'tis not left to you as a Matter indifferent: 'Tis as truly a Duty in its place, as Godly Sorrow, Humiliation and Repentance are in theirs. And 'tis more noble, as appertaining to the primitive and principal Part of Holineſs; whereas the other belong to the medicinal healing part thereof.

5. Above all things ſtrive to keep up the Warmth and Vigour of holy Love to God and your Redeemer: Let every other Grace do its part to promote this. Labour ſtill to get nearer to God, more inward with him, and that your Hearts may move more naturally towards him. *God is Love.*

Direct. 7. Obſerve narrowly the Temper and Behaviour of thoſe Perſons who ſeem ripeſt for Heaven, and take them for your Examples. Converſe much with ſuch: *He that walketh with the Wiſe, ſhall be wiſe.* In ſuch you may obſerve manifold Appearances of thoſe inward, gracious Principles, by which they are acted. In them you may obſerve great Humility and Condeſcenſion toward ſuch as are their Inferiours. Great tenderneſs for the Honour and Intereſt of God in the World; Great delight in making mention familiarly of thoſe that are gone to Heaven before them; An excellent compoſure of Gravity and Chearfulneſs; a weighty Seriouſneſs and Warmth in the Duties of Gods holy Worſhip: In a word, you may ſee plainly enough whither they are going, and how beautiful a thing Holineſs is thus growing up towards its Perfection.

FINIS.